



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600096465-









A COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
DISCOURSE OF THE LORD JESUS,  
COMMONLY CALLED  
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

BY THE  
REV. JAMES FREDERICK TODD, M.A.,  
OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,  
VICAR OF LISKEARD.



LONDON:  
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

LISKEARD: J. PHILP. CALLINGTON: E. PHILP.

1856.

*101. a. 184.*

LISKEARD:  
PRINTED BY J. PHILP, FORE-STREET.

## CONTENTS.

---

	Page.
<b>CHAPTER I.</b>	
The Beatitudes. § 1. The moral characteristics of the Blessed	
People of God . . . . .	1
§ 2. The special privilege of the Persecuted . . . . .	50
<b>CHAPTER II.</b>	
The exalted vocation and solemn responsibility of the Church	62
<b>CHAPTER III.</b>	
The abiding authority of the Law and of the Prophets. The	
perpetuity of the Sabbath, &c. . . . .	81
<b>CHAPTER IV.</b>	
The necessity of attaining to a more perfect righteousness than	
that of the Scribes and Pharisees; and an explanation of	
its four leading characteristics . . . . .	106
<b>PART I.</b>	
The holiness of the Law, and its fulfilment by love. § 1. Of	
anger, and of seeking reconciliation with an offended brother	
without delay . . . . .	111
§ 2. Of sensual desire . . . . .	125
and of proximate occasions of sin . . . . .	130
§ 3. Of divorce . . . . .	133
§ 4. Of oaths and vows . . . . .	137
§ 5. Of retaliation, resistance to injuries, and benevolence;	
and of the true application of the (usually) contrasted	
Mosaic precept . . . . .	147
§ 6. Of love to enemies . . . . .	169
<b>PART II.</b>	
The true motive of all acceptable service; the praise of God,	
not of man. § 7. Of almsgiving . . . . .	185
§ 8. Of prayer, . . . . .	192
especially of the Lord's prayer, and of the forgiveness of	
personal wrongs . . . . .	198
§ 9. Of fasting . . . . .	230

## PART III.

Contentment and simple affiance in the Lord, opposed to the sin of covetousness. § 10. Of true and false riches; of a worldly and spiritual mind; and of the impossibility of serving two masters, or of making any compromise between the claims of religion and the love of money . . .	239
§ 11. Of reliance upon divine Providence, and of avoiding all needless anxiety about temporal things and an uncertain future, with a reference to the importance of studying the book of nature . . . . .	256

## PART IV.

§ 12. None to be judged rashly or hypocritically . . .	274
--	-----

## CHAPTER V.

On not setting forth all truth indiscriminately before all men	285
Note on Pious Fraud, so called . . . . .	289

## CHAPTER VI.

The privilege of importunate and constant Prayer . . .	296
--	-----

## CHAPTER VII.

The Golden Rule . . . . .	309
---------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VIII.

Practical applications. I. The two Ways. The perseverance of the saints . . . . .	315
II. Caution against False Prophets, who may be tested by their fruits. This test of general application . . .	327
III. The danger of self-deception, or of resting in a mere profession, or in the exercise of spiritual gifts, without leading a holy life, in the power of the indwelling Spirit	333
IV. Wise and foolish hearers . . . . .	344

## CHAPTER IX.

The conclusion . . . . .	348
--------------------------	-----

## APPENDIX.

Note to Chapter III. A brief view of the central ideas of the first seventeen, or historical books of the Old Testament . . . . .	357
---	-----

## INTRODUCTION.

---

NO isolated phenomenon in the natural world carries its own explanation with it; but it is only by diligently arranging and comparing all such facts, as may be connected with it, that insight into nature can be attained, or that its laws can be discovered.\* It is in striking analogy with this doctrine of experience, that the apostle Peter affirms, that "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation."† It does not convey *its own* interpretation to the superficial reader. Nay, isolated from the volume of inspiration, or regarded simply and independently in itself, it will be inevitably perverted and misunderstood. Light must be reflected upon it from other portions of the divine word, bearing upon the same point, or otherwise related to it, before its real purport can be fully comprehended, or a satisfactory explanation of its phraseology can be attained. But error in its manifold Protean variations has constantly arisen from ignorance, or from neglect of this truth. Men too readily adopt precipitate conclusions from "a mere enumeration of particulars," or from a few separate passages, on which they delight to dwell,

\* Liebig.

† 2 Peter i. 20, and Horsley's Sermon. "It may touch a man with religious wonder to see how the footsteps of seducement are the very same in human and divine truth." Bacon.

because more specially adapted to their personal experience, or to their most cherished tendencies and earnest aspirations.\* As if the mind of a finite creature could itself afford a sufficient criterion of eternal truth; or as if an adequate view of an extensive landscape could be taken by the traveller, who wandered amongst its enamelled meadows and luxuriant thickets, and refused to ascend the single elevation, which would enable him to survey the whole area at a glance, and to detect the relative position of its prominent points.

The apocryphal saying, current in the early church, "be good money changers," is really pregnant with wisdom, beautifully illustrating the apostolic precept: "prove all things; hold fast that which is good."† Haste and carelessness constantly mislead the masses, prompting them too eagerly to acquiesce in whatever is plausibly and earnestly presented to their acceptance. But unless we have "our senses exercised by reason of use to discern both good and evil," and are duly trained by the diligent and comprehensive study of the whole Scripture, with its distinct lines upon lines, and precepts upon precepts, we shall be very apt to reject the precious coin which was really issued from the mint of God,

\* "Generally the student of nature ought to suspect what most arrests and enchains his intellect, and therefore in such cases the greater caution should be used to secure its impartiality." Bacon Nov. Org. "If the soundest mind be *magnetised* by any predilection, it must act irregularly." Cecil. A half truth conceived with deep religious feeling rapidly passes into error. See Neander Denkw. aus der Gesch des Christ. Lebens p. 38.

† 1 Thess. v. 21. See Clemens A. Strom. i. 11, 53; 28, 177; Chrysost. v. 5, p. 942 and 943.

with His own image and superscription, simply because it has become worn, and despoiled of its original brightness, by its circulation through a world of impurity, and to prefer some brilliant and artfully devised counterfeit which allures us by its freshness.

"Through wisdom," however, as the Proverb strikingly testifies, "is a house builded; by understanding it is established; and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches."\* There are, no doubt, various degrees of Christian attainment in every living church. Many, who have been made wise unto the saving of their souls, are never well established, or endowed with a correct understanding of the articles of their faith in their beauteous harmony; and of those, who are thus established, few follow on perseveringly, in the right use of their five talents, to the full measure of attainable enjoyment. In the church, as in the world, some die as little children; yet more as young men; only one here and there reaches a ripe old age.† The apostle believed the Hebrew Christians to be safe; for he knew how patiently they had "endured a great fight of afflictions," and could bear distinct

\* Prov. xxiv. 3, 4.

† "I question whether there is a thoughtful and studious divine who does not often modify his opinions in the course of his life. Who retains at the age of sixty all the views which he had at thirty? To have them would indicate a little mind. Truth is so profound, and we find in investigating it so much that resembles it, that it is easy to mistake it, as if already in our grasp. We are all, more or less, too hasty in our conclusions." Beausobre *Hist. de la Réf.* i. 317. "The lapse of a year brings such changes in all our minds, and till our faculties decay, changes surely for the better, unless we wilfully let the ground lie fallow, or plant it with weeds." Dr. Arnold.



witness to their labour of love, in kind and sympathetic ministrations to their brethren in Christ; nevertheless, he was constrained to reprove them, as dull of hearing, and as having need of milk, and not of strong meat, because they were still so unskilful in the word of righteousness. This is a humbling, and yet a comforting fact. For many, whose want of *manly* understanding\* we must now deplore, decidedly surpass us in every particular of practical holiness; and the earnest, devoted child is more precious and more beautiful, even in our eyes, than the colder and more enlightened man. But it is not therefore the less incumbent upon us to strive to combine warmth and wisdom, and thus to "follow on to perfection," or to the stature of men of full age† with all the earnestness of which we are capable, and to stimulate others to do the same. For truth does not lie upon the surface, neither is it revealed to the sluggard; nor can it ever be apprehended by those who rest in hasty generalisation, or in selected fragments of divine revelation.‡ All its treasures are hid in Christ; and it

\* 1 Cor. xiv. 20. The Jew Philo has many thoughts and phrases similar to the apostle's. See here vit. Moys. i. 8, &c.

† Heb. vi. 1, with v. 12—14.

‡ "We must be ever learning and inquiring. The well instructed alone know their ignorance, and how far they come short of the truth." Philo Quæst. in Gen. l. 4, § 156; de Plant. § 19. Compare 1 Cor. viii. 2. For dogmatism is the vice of ignorance or of inexperience alone; but "it is most conducive to the attainment of knowledge to inquire, to ask, to seem to know nothing, and to think that we have apprehended nothing accurately." Philo Quis Rer. Div. Her. § 3. But this must not be extended so far as to call in question the clearness and certainty of the leading doctrines of revelation, or the Christian's own personal assurance of salvation; for "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 1 John v. 10.

is only as we abide and work in Him, that we can prosper in any of our investigations, or find any knowledge really salutary and precious.

For the most part, indeed, every well instructed Christian has been taught very gradually, having only acquired his maturity of wisdom and knowledge by the habitual exercise of caution,\* and by the firmness, with which he has refused to bow to any human teacher, and ever waited, in prayerful dependence upon the Spirit, and in diligent investigation of the whole word of God, for further† light.

When the Lord Himself sojourned amongst men, He carefully adapted the lessons which He inculcated, to the varying circumstances and capacities of His disciples, leading them on step by step to the clearer knowledge of His character and Person,‡ and of the real object of His Advent. Nor even thus was He fully understood by their pre-occupied minds. The gift of the Holy Ghost was deferred; but He alone could

\* It was Sir A. Pawlet's maxim, "stay a while, that we may make an end the sooner;" Bacon made it his own.

† See the farewell exhortations of Robinson of Leyden, one of the original Independents, in Neal's History of the Puritans: V. ii. p. 109. "I am verily persuaded the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of His holy word. Luther and Calvin penetrated not into the whole counsel of God, but were they now living would be as willing to receive further light, as that which they first received." Compare Milton's Prose Works V. i. p. 319—329: ed. 1806. "Truth amongst mortal men is always on her progress," &c.

‡ Compare Matt. viii. 25—27 with xiv. 32, 33. Was not this revelation (see xvi. 17,) the object of His prayer, (xiv. 23,) and of His continued absence from the exhausted fishermen?

"bring all things," which the Lord had taught them, or had accomplished in their presence, "to their remembrance," and practically "guide them into all truth." Neither, however, was His work one of violence, or of constraint.\* None of the laws of the human mind were suspended; the necessity of thought, of earnest inquiry, and of patient labour, as it were concentrated in the search after hidden treasures, was never superseded; and the apostles themselves were very slow in discovering the full extent of the mystery revealed to them, and of that grand commission which the gifts on the day of Pentecost supernaturally enabled them to execute.

Even the threefold office of the Messiah, as our Prophet, Priest, and King, was only gradually unfolded in the Gospel, although it is obvious, that, in the purpose of the Eternal Father, He had necessarily sustained it at every moment, on behalf of every member of His universal church. But it would appear, that it was more particularly as a Prophet and a Teacher, sent from God, that Jesus of Nazareth first manifested Himself in Israel; and that His Priestly Office was only actually declared, when He rose again from the dead, and with

\* *Common sense* (in the conduct of life) has been well said to consist chiefly in that temper of mind, which enables its possessor to view the various circumstances around him with perfect accuracy and coolness, so that each of them may produce its due impression without any exaggeration arising from his peculiar habits. This admirable quality, applied to the consideration and interpretation of the Scriptures, is a sure indication of the presence of that "Spirit of a sound mind," (2 Tim. i. 7) the absence of which we have to deplore in so many popular writers of the present day.

His own blood entered in once for all into the presence of Jehovah, there to plead with sovereign efficacy, as the true Melchizedek, for His people. In like manner, although He already sits as a Priest upon a throne, and reigns in the hearts of those, made willing to serve Him, by divine grace, in the midst of His enemies, He cannot take unto Himself His great power, and fully establish His royal authority over a ransomed or a conquered earth, until all those enemies have been made His footstool, and Israel is restored in glory.

In the days of His prophecy, therefore, His teaching was necessarily diversified in character, as it had reference to one or other of the great ends of His Advent, and was addressed either to the multitude at large, or exclusively to His immediate disciples. A parabolical style was characteristic of every Eastern Teacher; but the use of elaborate parables seems not to have been adopted, until the Pharisees had openly opposed Him, and by their wicked insinuations and reproaches laboured to set the people against Him, because they were at once envious of His growing popularity, and irritated by His zealous exposure of the moral evil, which they loved and cherished.\* He had cried, "repent and believe the Gospel;" because "the time was fulfilled, and the kingdom of God was at hand;"† and it was His declared object to carry on the work commenced by His immediate Forerunner, checked by his imprisonment. Attention was very generally excited by His miracles, and by the peculiar authority and grace, with which He

\* See p. 294.

† Mark i. 14, 15.

spake;\* so that even officers, sent to apprehend Him, partook of the general impression, and could only account for the spell which bound them, by declaring that never man spake as He did.† On one of those frequent occasions, when great multitudes flocked to hear Him, He ascended the mount, or a commanding eminence at hand, to which probably He had often resorted with His disciples, in the vicinity of Capernaum,‡ and when He had sat down, in the calm majesty of His office, He began a formal exposition of those laws, by which His kingdom is governed, and in conformity to which alone true happiness can be realised.

It was thus a preliminary work. Repentance implies a turning from sin to God, and this necessarily involves the production of suitable fruit. But what is sin? and what is the character and will of God; or the fruit which He requires, or that mode of life, in which alone we can habitually enjoy real spiritual communion with a heavenly Father? The multitude had been hitherto unable to answer these questions; for they

\* Mark xii. 37; Luke xix. 48, &c.

† John vii. 45, 46.

‡ Bishop Middleton refers the original phrase to "the mountain district" generally, but this interpretation seems too vague to suit the context. Compare Luke vi. 12. The Harmonists, however, seem very erroneously to identify the short address in that context, pronounced after the ordination of the apostles, with this earlier and more systematic discourse. It was to be expected that the divine Teacher would frequently repeat its more important lessons with additions or variations; and the Table at the close of this Introduction will prove that He did so. It appears that the entrance into Capernaum is immediate in Luke vii. 1, but not in Matt. viii. 5.

really "knew not the law." But the simple, concise definition of sin, given by the apostle, is its opposition to the divine will, as "the transgression of *the law*;"\* for "where no law is, there is no transgression."† This alone will enable us to discern our sin, and its bitterness and power,‡ as it explicitly unfolds the holy and benevolent will of an unchangeable Creator, and points out that undefiled way, in which no mere man, or natural child of Adam, has ever yet been enabled uninterruptedly to walk.

The law, indeed, as the object of Israel's pride, was more or less diligently taught to their children, whilst portions of it were ostentatiously written on their phylacteries. But although the whole was read in order in their synagogues, and to a certain extent constantly studied, expounded and enforced by their doctors, the Scribes and Pharisees, these "blind leaders of the blind"§ virtually annulled and repealed it, by their traditions, false glosses, and unholy limitations, in many important particulars, and thus deceived the people, and rendered them wretched hypocrites, or cold and lifeless formalists, like themselves.

In another point of view, St. John teaches us to contrast with the law, given by Moses, that grace and truth, which came by Jesus Christ.|| Not that He superseded its holy rule, its necessary sanctions, or

\* See page 87.

† Rom. iv. 15.

‡ Id. iii. 20; viii. 7—13; 1 Cor. xv. 56.

§ Matt. xv. 1—14; Mark vii. 1—13.

|| John i. 17.

its salutary doctrines; but that He supplied what it could neither impart nor reveal, pardon to transgressors, and grace to His servants to enable them to fulfil its requirements; and that He Himself accomplished all that had been hitherto prefigured by its appendix of types, sacrifices, and ceremonies, and thus developed the substance of that shadowy outline, or the truth wrapt up in its symbols.\* But at present Jesus exhibits His gracious compassion towards the people, by simply removing the stumbling blocks in their way, and by substituting the true meaning of His own law for the deceitful representations of its false teachers; in order to show them their sin and danger, and thus prepare them, in the way of painful convictions, to seek earnestly for a Saviour, or to prize His forgiving mercy.

Hence again, at a later period, when this object had been in some good measure accomplished in the hearts of His disciples, and when they already knew Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Lamb "that taketh away the sin of the world," the Bread of life, His teaching assumed a different form. Thus we find Him speaking in the private (or, esoteric) discourses, recorded by the beloved disciple, rather as a High Priest and Mediator, with reference to the office so soon to be more clearly revealed, for the special consolation of His faithful but imperfect servants, who enjoyed "the blessing of Abraham," and were therefore, like him, lovingly addressed as His Friends!

But *now* as a man, in the form of a servant Himself,

\* The law is the image and shadow of the truth. Clemens A. Strom. vi. 7, 58. See p. 83, 84.

and as one "made under the law," with reverence be it spoken, in referring to that law, He could only speak as a Teacher and Expositor, not as a Lawgiver; and we shall presently see how emphatically He corrects any false impression, which might possibly have arisen in the minds of His hearers, that He was come to dissolve existing laws, or to extend them, as if they were deficient in breadth and spirituality.\*

It certainly is a very grievous error to contrast *the standard of morality inculcated* in various parts of the one Holy Bible, which is all given by like inspiration from God, and which everywhere unfolds the same sublime and comprehensive rule of supreme love to God, and of equal love to every man. The apostle declared, that, even in those parts which alone were familiar from childhood to Timothy, it was all "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" because its details, when rightly expounded, warn us to abstain from all evil, and tend to

\* See p. 81, &c. Chrysostom ignorantly said, "if it were not to lay down new rules, why did Christ come? If we are only to hear the same things, what need was there of a heavenly Teacher?" T. viii. p. 489, 490: (ed. Commel. and Paris, 1603, &c., in ten folio volumes.) See note p. 6.

It must be observed that there is no reference in any of the parallels in St. Luke to any opposite precepts to those inculcated by the Lord, and that the same Evangelist omits the statements in Matt. v. 17, 20; xv. 1—9; with the last clause in vii. 12. The reason seems to be obvious. He wrote for Gentiles, neither acquainted with the traditions of the elders, nor jealously suspicious of any contradiction of the Old Testament. His omissions, therefore, seem strongly to corroborate the argument in the following pages. (p. 113, &c.)



perfect the man of God, and to render him complete in every good work.\* For true religion must always have been the same spiritual thing, or powerful principle influencing the whole man; since happiness is invariably connected with holiness, or the restoration of the divine image to the soul; and an unchangeable God necessarily requires the same meetness at all times for the enjoyment of His presence, because all evil is infinitely abhorrent from His perfections.† Coleridge, therefore, rightly denied, that there is a single moral precept of the Gospel, which is not to be found in the Old Testament; but he considered the proof of this a grand desideratum, and this too, as a thing calculated to open the eyes of Socinians, if any thing can, to their false estimate of the object of the Messiah's Advent. It is hoped that such proof will be found given in detail in this Commentary,‡

\* 2 Tim. iii. 15—17. See p. 92, 93, &c.

† "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." Psalm xcvi. 10. "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so the Lord, the God of Hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken." Amos v. 14, and cf. ib. 15.

‡ The reader will bear in mind, that Philo of Alexandria was at the height of his reputation in the reign of Caligula about A.D. 40, when he was dispatched on an embassy to Rome to plead the cause of the oppressed Jews. Josephus, the false and dishonourable historian of his countrymen, to whom such undue credit has been so constantly ascribed, witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem A.D. 70, as a prisoner at large in the Roman Camp. Niebuhr justly estimated his character, when he called him an "interesting arch-rogue." He skilfully insinuated himself into the favor of Vespasian and Titus by his unscrupulous arts and false flattery. Tertullian of Carthage and Clement of Alexandria, who are also often cited in these pages, flourished A.D. 192—217. John Chrysostom, ("the golden-mouthed")

and that the conclusions thus established, through the divine blessing, may tend to the exposure of other prevalent errors.

Not that the *actual morality* of the Old Testament saints reached the standard before them. This is altogether another question. But who is there, even in the present day, with such an elevated tone of feeling pervading society at large, (at least comparatively

archbishop of Constantinople, was born at Antioch in 347 or 353, and died in exile in 407. His loose declamation, however striking, involves a miserable system of theology, as will presently appear. Augustine, bishop of Hippo in Africa, who has been called the prince of divines, was born in 354, and died in 430. He was a true Christian of great intellectual power, (in faith and knowledge strikingly superior to his Greek contemporary,) and many noble spirits in the Middle Ages, like Claude of Turin, and even Luther himself, were indebted to his valuable works for much evangelical light; and yet he was more or less ensnared himself by the wretched system of his age, and especially by the popular asceticism. (See Confess. x. 31; viii. 6; ix. 6, &c.) At the same time, he most distinctly acknowledges the exclusive supremacy of Scripture. (See note p. 104.) His latest work, or *Retractations* of former opinions, which he had seen reason to modify or to abandon, does him the greatest honour. Roger Bacon, an enlightened Franciscan of the 13th century, not only denounces the weight of insufficient authority as a most formidable obstacle to the progress of knowledge, but strikingly observes in reference to this,—“we have seen that much which he laid down with great authority, he subsequently with greater humility retracted, thus acknowledging the great imperfection previously concealed. What, then, if he had survived to our times? Doubtless he would have corrected and altered much more.” The volume of Mr. Trench, quoted in the following pages is entitled “An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, drawn from the writings of St. Augustine;” (2nd. edition): but this is more interesting than satisfactory.

speaking,) and with institutions, manners, and habits, whether resulting from education, climate, or national tastes and tendencies, so much more favourable to the steady exhibition of high and ennobling virtue, who habitually practises, or invariably pursues, whatever is true and honest, or just and pure, or lovely and of good report, and as constantly renounces everything contrary to this? Neither, however, is the defective example of the Old Testament saints ever prescribed as a rule to us. If Jacob deceived his father, and by subtilty deprived Esau of his birthright, it is not for us to imitate his guile;\* and lest we should be tempted to do so, Moses more carefully details the wretchedness, which it entailed upon him, and the remarkable manner, in which his own subsequent life was embittered to him, in the righteous retribution of Providence, by the *deceit* and fraud of Laban, and of his own sons.† We can readily distinguish in other instances between the excellencies of individuals, and the faults and errors from which they were not exempted, because arising from the character of their generation, or from the peculiar circumstances of their times. We are familiar, for example, with the frailties, superstitions, and blunders of Luther; but we ascribe them to the irresistible influence of his age upon an imperfect creature, and

\* See Psalm xxxii. 2; John i. 47.

† "A careful examination of the law of Moses will (also) show that he only tolerated polygamy as an existing evil, but that he intended to discourage it, by exhibiting the original institution of marriage, and the many evils that result from a departure from God's purpose." M'Caul. Old Paths No. 47. Of divorce, see below p. 133.

therefore do not less admire the hero raised up by divine Providence, and qualified by divine grace, for the mighty work which he so nobly accomplished. The example of Jesus alone is pure and spotless: whatever encouragement we may derive from the character of others, we cannot refer to them as to a standard of perfection, or to an unerring rule for our guidance; but He is "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

---

*The following Table indicates the passages in this portion of the Gospel of St. Matthew, which are represented by parallels in that of St. Luke, more or less exactly. Those marked with an asterisk are only partially or remotely parallel.*

MATTHEW V. 3, 4, 6.	- -	LUKE VI. 20, 21.
" 11, 12.	- -	" 22, 23.
" 13.	- -	" XIV. 34, 35.*
" 15.	- -	" VIII. 16, and XI. 33.
" 18.	- -	" XVI. 17.
" 25, 26.	- -	" XII. 58, 59.
" 32.	- -	" XVI. 18.
" 39, 40, 42.	- -	" VI. 29, 30.
" 44—47.	- -	" 27, 28; 35; 32—34.
" 48 ("perfect.")	- -	" 36, ("merciful.")
" VI. 9—13.	- -	" XI. 2—4.
" 20, 21.	- -	" XII. 33, 34.
" 22, 23.	- -	" XI. 34—36.
" 24.	- -	" XVI. 13.
" 25—33.	- -	" XII. 22—31.
" VII. 1, 2.	- -	" VI. 37, 38.
" 3, 4.	- -	" 41, 42.
" 7—11.	- -	" XI. 9—13.
" 12.	- -	" VI. 31.
" 13.	- -	" XIII. 24.*
" 16.	- -	" VI. 44.
" 18.	- -	" 43.
" 21.	- -	" 46;* and XIII. 25.*
" 23.	- -	" XIII. 27.*
" 24—27.	- -	" VI. 47—49.
" 28.	- -	" IV. 32.*

## ERRATA.

- Page 4, note 2, line 7.** Add "the" before "history."  
18, note 2. For "not in Luke," read "Luke xiii. 35."  
56, line 5. For "for those," read "from those."  
58, line 9. For "mere," read "more."  
67, line 12. For "of people," read "the people."  
117, notes, line 21. For "See," read "Lee."  
238, notes, line 3. For "Rom. vii. 20," read "Rom. vii. 24."  
253, line 10. For "live," read "love."  
357, note 3, line 5. After "resurrection" add "of Christ."



COMMENTARY  
ON THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

---

CHAPTER I.

THE BEATITUDES.

§ 1. *The Moral Characteristics of the Blessed People of God.* MATT. v. 3—9.

THE characteristics of the truly happy, and the corresponding promises, in which they are specially interested, are here stated in simple and authoritative detail by the Lord. No doubt his opening\* sentence must have struck his hearers with a deep feeling of solemn awe and thrilling amazement; since it presented such a striking contrast to the practice and walk of other Teachers, and to the ordinary tone of their doctrine. Nor would this feeling have been weakened, as he proceeded to recommend so many qualities, equally inconsistent with the customs and notions of the world. But these are all necessarily combined in the portrait of

\* The expressions in ver. 2, "he opened his mouth," are regarded as emphatic, and introductory to "a discourse more than commonly weighty and full." Compare Job iii. 1: Acts viii. 35, &c. *Trench*, p. 161.



a consistent christian. To mar, or to blot out, one feature would be to obscure the glory of the new creature, or to prove that the workmanship of the Almighty Spirit was still unknown. For, although none have ever been endowed with such moral beauty, as to present the lineaments of each feature in equal perfection, or to exhibit the combined whole without some observable defects, every heir of the kingdom must be brought into more or less exact conformity to this image. The operations of divine grace render every believer more or less poor in spirit, meek, and contrite in heart, teaching him still to hunger and thirst after a higher degree of righteousness, to exercise invariable kindness and compassion, to cherish purity of mind, and to labour as far as possible to diffuse peace and goodwill amongst his fellows. All, therefore, without exception, who have really put on this new man, however feeble or imperfect in its development, shall be comforted, and ultimately endowed with perfect righteousness, in the enjoyment of the promised land, and of consummated mercy, in the vision of the Godhead, as the acknowledged sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

But this subject will be rendered plainer by division, and we shall thus rise from the more earnest pursuit of particulars separately considered\* to the fuller realisation of the whole.

\* Trench illustrates their union by reference to a cluster of grapes, of various sizes, and perhaps not all ripening exactly together, but all hanging on one stalk, &c.—p. 181.

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* (v. 3.)

When the Lord stood up to read in the synagogue at Nazareth, he opened the roll at that striking passage of Isaiah, which commences in a similar strain. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel (or, good tidings) to the poor."\* We here see how Jesus began to fulfil this prophecy by first addressing himself to those,† who were most in need of consolation and support.

Campbell, however, contends that those literally *poor* are now intended, who bear their affliction without repining; for such, no doubt, were especially *chosen*, as St. James intimates, to be "heirs of the kingdom, which the Lord has promised to them that love him." This, indeed, affords a very beautiful illustration of the characteristic superiority of Christianity to all human systems of philosophy in the ancient world. Their proud teachers either despised the poor, or (at least) looked upon them as incapable of privilege; but our divine Master pointed not only to his miracles as sufficient credentials of his Messiahship, but also to the novel fact that the poor

\* *Anav* is variously rendered humble, meek, poor, or afflicted, as the context seems to require. *Anava* signifies *humility* in Prov. xxii. 4; xv. 33.

† Honour shall uphold *the humble in spirit*. Prov. xxix. 23. (*Shephal ruach*: see Isaiah lvii. 15.) Better is it to be of an *humble spirit* with the *lowly*, than to divide the spoil with the proud. Prov. xvi. 19.

had a Gospel preached to them.\* But his language in this place is evidently of a much more comprehensive character, and must therefore be referred to that internal state of mind,† which is essential to all acceptable communion with an exalted king, and which lies at the threshold of the Gospel, as the foundation of all Christian principle and character.‡ For a humbling consciousness

\* Matt. xi. 5. We read in Mark xii. 37, that "the common people heard him gladly." Contrast the contemptuous language of the Pharisees, "this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." John vii. 49.

† Chrysostom twice cites the passage, as if he read *οἱ ταπεινοί* ("the humble") in the text. (T. i. p. 232; T. viii. p. 546.) But he elsewhere ascribes greater force to the actual expressions before us, and interprets "in spirit," in the choice of their minds. (T. vii. p. 135.) Tertullian says, "none are truly poor in spirit but the humble." (de Patient. c. 11.) Clement of Alexandria, in a striking commentary on history of the rich youth in the Gospel, distinguishes between the voluntary poverty, or literal renunciation of worldly goods, which the Monks carried to such an extreme in subsequent ages, and the disposition of mind there required by the Lord, which alone is of real value, or that poverty of spirit, which is here pronounced blessed. (de Div. Serv. § 16.) Augustine explained it as referring to those, who have not an inflated spirit; but Trench justly observes that, as the term "poor" excludes the false riches of pride and self sufficiency, "in spirit" denotes the region of the inner man, (or an internal feeling and disposition.) Luke vi. 20, (Tertull. ad Uxor. l. 2. c. 8; adv. Marc l. 4, c. 14,) must be interpreted by this fuller passage; but this was not perceived by Tertullian.

‡ See Matt. xviii. 1—4; 2 Cor. xii. 11; Galat. ii. 6; vi. 3; Prov. xxii. 4, &c. Chrysostom says, the Beatitudes commence with humility, because salvation is impossible without it. (T. 8, p. 170.) He calls it the parent of all good, or itself the chief excellency in man. (T. 5, p. 878; T. 4, p. 187.) Even Plato uses *ταπεινός* in a good sense. (de Leg. iv. 716.)

of our own inherent poverty and nothingness must necessarily precede any earnest application to the opened treasures of divine love, or any heart-felt application of the Gospel to ourselves.

Coleridge once beautifully said, that "there are permitted moments of exaltation through faith, when the soul ceases to feel its own emptiness, save as a capacity for the Redeemer's fullness." But this is no ordinary experience, even in the church; and in the world self love is too commonly nourished by vain comparisons with the state of other men, and by the deceitful flattery of friends and associates. The pride of the natural heart\* is even aggravated by the artificial props, on which our external circumstances may enable us to lean, without any great disappointment, in times of prosperity, or in the days of our youth. A prevalent want of deep thought and serious reflection generally permits the multitude to grow up in the grossest ignorance of their real state, and of their absolute need of something beyond themselves. Whatever failings may be detected seem to them light and venial; whatever better qualities may attest the original glory of fallen humanity are exaggerated, or regarded with unbounded

\* This is not only presumptuous folly in a creature living on the mere bounty of God, (*Philo de Vict Of*, § 6,) but also most odious to Him. (*id. de Post Cain*, § 13.) See *Psalm cxxxviii. 6*; *Prov. xxi. 4*; *xxix. 23*; *James iv. 6*, &c. "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." *1 Cor. iii. 18*.

self complacency; and when every other prospect fails, a man still often dreams with the heathen poet, of wrapping up himself in his own virtue, and thus braving every storm with stoical apathy. The very profligate can talk of his good heart, and consoles himself by this plea. His sins he imputes to his fortune, or to the inevitable force of circumstances, or to the power of innate desires; his freedom from other forms of vice he as confidently ascribes to himself, and alleges as meritorious, perhaps even as compensative.

Socrates, however, often adverted to the celebrated maxim of the Delphian oracle, "know thyself," as the foundation of all that is really noble in humanity, or precious in science.\* A genuine philosopher, wisely inquisitive as to all the secrets of nature, must feel convinced, that it is the first and most important business of his life to consider his own ways, to analyse his own character, to unmask himself to himself, and thus really behold the workings of his own mind and heart, as in a

\* See Philo Jud de Somn i. 10, &c. He says in condemnation of physical inquiries, "before we have well inspected our own house, is it not the height of madness to investigate the universe?" Terah, the father of Abraham, is compared with Socrates; but the first is represented as the idea, of which the other was a living illustration.

The object of the frequent references to Philo in these pages is to show the approximations of the philosophical Jew to the Christian standard, and thus to set the real characteristics of the Gospel in a clearer light. For this is not a revelation of a new moral code, but of the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and of the office of the promised Comforter.

clear and faithful mirror, in order that he may correct their defects, and regulate all their tendencies. But to the heathen such accurate self knowledge would have been intolerable. A thorough acquaintance with all the secret operations and corruptions of a heart, which is described by the prophet as "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," would have plunged the best of them into despair. That little real progress was ordinarily made by them in this direction, may perhaps be safely concluded from the history of the admired Titus, who was cut off in the prime of his manhood, and is said to have died bewailing his own unmerited end, and protesting that he had committed but one act to be repented of, or regretted!

Indeed, it is the Spirit alone, who can safely reveal to us all the secret abominations of our hearts, and thus lead us, under a deep feeling of self condemnation and self loathing, to Christ for pardon and peace. We learn nothing aright, until we are laid low before his footstool. Humility is "the first, the second, and the last thing" in the character of a true Christian, constituting as it does the appointed clothing of his soul.\* The lower he now sinks in his own eyes, the more certainly and gloriously will he be exalted at the last;† for the deeper the foundations of the spiritual temple are laid,

\* 1 Peter v. 5. Contrast the Horatian "virtute mea me involvo."

† Luke xviii. 14. Pride goeth before destruction, but before honour is humility. Prov. xvi. 18; xviii. 12, &c. See Psalm cxxxviii. 6; xxx. 6, 7; Hosea xiii. 1.

the firmer and more admirable will be the superstructure. Such, indeed, is the uniform lesson of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and of modern experience, as well as of the Scriptures.

The trials of Job were specially designed to empty him of all self dependence, and of every lurking feeling of pride and self complacency. And this end was accomplished by the influx of the light of the knowledge of the glory and majesty of God, more immediately revealed to his soul. He was thus constrained to "abhor himself, as vile and unclean," instead of vainly dwelling upon his moral excellencies, and pleading his own cause, as if he had been unjustly visited by the wrath of the Almighty.\* He had nothing of his own to glory in; his admired virtues were but filthy rags!†

In like manner, it was by the vision of the ineffable glory of the Triune Jehovah, and of His infinite Holiness, that Isaiah was led to exclaim, "woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."‡ How could such a sinner unite in the exalted song of Seraphim? or be permitted to praise the Beauty of Holiness? or to enter into his Presence?

The various declarations of the apostle strikingly enforce the same lesson of humility. For each of his references to his own experience seems to be more

\* Job xl. 4, 5; xlii. 5, 6. Contrast xxxi.; xxxii. 2; xxxiv. 5.

† See Isaiah lxiv. 6.

‡ Isaiah vi. 5.

lowly than the preceding one, as his spirit enjoyed closer communion with his God. In himself nothing, unworthy of the name of an apostle, less than the least of all saints, the chief of sinners. And yet he needed a perpetual "thorn in the flesh," a buffeting of Satan, and a temptation of no ordinary character, to keep him thus low, in the midst of all his privileges and indefatigable labours of love!\*

Rutherford very strongly expresses his own self abhorrence, or his deep sense of what he calls his "abominable vileness," expatiating upon the truth involved in the language of Paul, and thus evidencing the unchanged operations of the Spirit on the human heart.†

The prophet, indeed, generally represents Jehovah turning away, as it were with indignation and contempt, from a desecrated material temple, to *look*‡ with complacency and favor upon the pious individual, who is "poor, and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at his holy word." For He will not *dwell* exclusively in the high and holy place, reared without hands, as the inhabitant of eternity, pervading all time and space, as One incapable of being circumscribed, even in thought.

\* See 1 Cor. xv. 8, 9; Eph. iii. 8; 1 Tim. i. 15; 2 Cor. xii.

† "If I were well known, there would be none in this kingdom ask how I do. Many take my ten to be a hundred; but I am a deeper hypocrite and shallower professor than every one believeth."

‡ Isaiah lxvi. 2. The Psalmist represents himself as "poor and needy;" Psalm xl. 17; lxx. 5; but confidently anticipates help and deliverance. See Psalm lxxiv. 19; 21; Isaiah xli. 17; Psalm x. 14; 17, &c.



He rather delights, in His marvellous condescension, to manifest himself abidingly in the man of a contrite and humble spirit,\* with reviving energy, or with cheering revelations of his unchangeable lovingkindness and truth! No other sacrifice can be accepted.† But upon this the fire of the Spirit invariably descends, consuming whatever is corruptible, and shedding abroad the love of God, as at once a seal, and an earnest, of the incorruptible and imperishable.

The poor in spirit thus become "the temples of the Holy Ghost," and are filled with all the precious manifestations of His presence, "righteousness, peace, and spiritual joy,"‡ which are the present privileges and characteristics of the kingdom of God, the first-fruits of its future consummation in glory.

But the particular expression§ before us demands more attentive consideration, as it occurs so frequently throughout the Gospel, and the disciples are commanded, when they pray to their Heavenly Father, earnestly to implore the coming of His Kingdom, as alike glorious to Him, and blessed to themselves.

The days of heaven are not yet manifested upon the

\* Isaiah lvii. 15: see Psalm lxviii. 18; Eph. ii. 20—22; &c.

† Psalm li. 17.

‡ Rom. xiv. 17. See Coloss. i. 13.

§ Augustine says this belongs exclusively to the new covenant. But compare Exodus xix. 5, 6, with 1 Peter ii. 9, in the light of Daniel. Philo called wisdom a kingdom, (de Migr Abr. § 36,) and the mind of the wise, the house and kingdom of God. (de Prœm Poen § 20.)

earth. Satan and his hosts are still proudly contending for the mastery, in mad rebellion against Jehovah; and as the rulers of the darkness of a world,\* full of impiety, iniquity, and lust, they too manifestly hold a large majority of the human family in their grasp, as their lawful captives and unresisting slaves, powerless and hopeless† as corpses on the battle field.‡ But “the prince of this world,”§ adored by blinded devotees as he was, must have lied, when he said to the Prince of Peace, “all the power of the kingdoms of the earth is delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it.”|| This claim, however, has sometimes been quoted as an authoritative statement of fact. No doubt those tyrants, whom the Lord has raised up from time to time, as

\* Eph. vi. 12.

† “They sat in darkness:” Matt. iv. 16, a token of their not even hoping for deliverance. Chrysost. T. 7, p. 128.

‡ 1 John v. 19.

§ John xiv. 30. That is, of the wicked, as Chrysostom observes. T. 8, p. 381.

|| Luke iv. 6. But Satan could neither tempt Job, nor the apostles, nor touch the property of the first, without divine permission. Job. i.; ii.; Luke xxii. 31. The evil spirit can only deceive Ahab, when Jehovah permits him to do so, as the instrument of His own wrath. 1 Kings xxii. 19—22. Compare 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, with 1 Chron. xxi. 1, where Satan again appears as the subordinate agent. The legion of demons could not even enter into *the swine*, without the permission of Jesus. Matt. viii. 31, Mark v. 12; Luke v. 12. Certainly the power of Satan has not increased since that day, though he is not yet bound. See Matt. xii. 28, 29; Coloss. ii. 15. All power is really given to the exalted Son of Man. Matt. xxviii. 18; xi. 27; John xvii 2.

scourges to punish his rebellious creatures, to show forth His power, and to declare His name, as types of antichrist, regarded themselves as irresponsible persons, creators of their own fortunes, and seemed to Satan mere instruments of his own evil will. Nay, the great ones of the earth still too habitually forget the real source of their dominion, and their unceasing dependence upon Jehovah, as they are led captive by his power, and fatally blinded by his crafty devices. Nevertheless, the Almighty sits enthroned in glory, as at the beginning, causing the wrath of man and the rage of the Evil One alike to praise Him,\* restraining the proud waves by a perpetual decree, and doing according to His will, "in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth;" for none "can stay His hand, or say, what doest thou?" His providence prevails over all, and He gives the kingdom "to whomsoever He will."†

Proud Nebuchadnezzar, the golden head of the mysterious image, symbolical of worldly power, was led to acknowledge this by a series of special miracles; and all the kings of the earth, willingly or unwillingly, shall eventually be brought to the same conclusion, and will then do homage to the name of God.‡ But, even now, Wisdom testifies in the book of Proverbs, that "kings reign, and princes decree justice, yea, princes

\* Psalm lxxvi. 10.

† Daniel iv. 35; 32. See Job xxxiv. 29, 30.

‡ See Psalm lxxii. 10, 11; Isaiah xlix. 7; 23, &c.

rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth, by Him,\* *and Him* alone. For, as the apostle emphatically asserts, "there is no power but of God; the powers that be (however various their designations and authority, or the immediate source of their appointment) are (all alike) ordained of God;" and the ruler, or magistrate, is therefore to be regarded as *His minister* to the church "for good!"†

And yet the course of Divine Providence is still involved in such deep mystery, that we are frequently unable to discern the gracious rule of our Father. How often, for instance, do the enemies of His Christ and of His people abuse their magisterial authority to harrass them with bitter persecutions; or to carry on their evil designs with a high hand, in manifest subservience to the prince of darkness! It is beyond a question, that the kingdom, of which the prophets wrote with such enthusiasm, is not yet revealed in the plenitude of its power.

The mystical image must first be broken in pieces. The stone cut without hands will ultimately smite it upon the feet of iron and clay, itself become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth, consuming and destroying all other kingdoms; and its glory will thus

\* Prov. viii. 15, 16.

† Rom. xiii. Illustrated by the experience of Israel. Contrast Judges xxi. 25, &c. with 2. Chron. xvii. 7—9.; Nehm. xiii. 10—14. See also with reference to the Persian kings, Ezra i. 2; vii. 6, 27; Nehem. ii. 5, 9, &c.

be established for ever.\* But nothing of this kind is yet accomplished.

When Jesus of Nazareth was manifested in the flesh, and even when Jerusalem was destroyed, the fourth kingdom was ruling the earth with an iron rod, in the fulness of its majesty and power. But it was soon to be broken up. Ten horns, parallel with the ten toes of the image, appear in the prophetic vision, intimating so many, or probably an indefinite number† of, principalities and states, into which the great empire has been divided.‡ After these, another sprang up of peculiar character, before whom *three* of the former fell, and who is described as making war with the saints, and prevailing against them, *unto the time of the end.*§

In striking contrast, however, to the savage forms and violent rule of the preceding monarchs, as symbolized by the four wild beasts in the vision, Daniel now beheld one like a son of man, or one in human form, of gentle nature, exercising his power “by bands of love, or the cords of a man,” according to the beautiful language of Hosea.|| And He came in the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days, and received from Him authority and dominion over all people,

\* Daniel ii. 34, 35, 44, 45.

† As may be inferred from ordinary usage. Gen. xxxi. 7, 41; Numb. xiv. 22; Nehem. iv. 12; Job xix. 3; Zeck. viii. 23; Matt. xxv. 1; Luke xix. 13.

‡ Dan. vii. 7.

§ Id. 8; 20—22; 24, 25. *Ten* Kings still appear. Rev. xvii. 12.

|| Hosea xi. 4.

nations, and kingdoms, that He might rule over them for ever.\*

This is also foretold in the second Psalm, where the risen and exalted Messiah is represented on the holy hill of Sion; and Jehovah bids him ask for the nations of the earth, and engages to give them to him, for his inheritance, that he may rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.† They had vainly conspired against him;‡ but timely submission would avert impending ruin from their representatives and rulers, as the warning exhortation of the Psalmist§ testifies. This, however, will not be regarded in the latter day, for the kings will give their power to the Beast, and fight once more against the Lord.||

But the authority of the Messiah shall be triumphantly established.¶ The Ancient of Days appears to give judgment to the afflicted saints; and they shall also possess the kingdom.\*\*

The Blasphemous Horn or Prince who had worn

\* Daniel vii. 13, 14.

† Psalm ii. 8, 9. How strangely one verse is continually severed from the other, and quoted in a perverted sense!

‡ Acts iv. 25—28.

§ Psalm ii. 10, 11.

|| More completely fulfilling vers. 1—5. See Rev. xvii. 12—14, &c.

¶ Rev. xi. 15—18, synchronous with vi. 12—17; Psalm ii. 5, &c., 2 Tim. iv. 1.

\*\* Daniel vii. 22. Combine Psalm ii. 9 with Psalm cxlix. 4—9; and 2 Tim. ii. 12, &c.

them away for three times and a half,\* is thus overcome, and his dominion finally consumed;† as Antichrist, or the man of sin, with whom he must be identified, is to be destroyed with the brightness of Christ's second coming, and consumed by the breath of his mouth.‡

Now it is manifest that the saints of God are not yet exalted in glory; and that neither their wishes nor their counsels are paramount in the earth. On the other hand, though often sorely harrassed and oppressed, it is no less obvious that they are not subject to any such terrible or universal persecution, as that which the prophet announces, as continuing to *the time of the end*. If, therefore, (the personal) Antichrist is not yet destroyed, he cannot yet have been really manifested.

Bunsen, indeed, boldly exclaims with unbecoming severity, "Oh, the blind prophets and theologians! who interpret the signs of the Apocalypse, and explain, as prophetic of our days, what has reference to the fall of Jerusalem and of Rome, and yet are struck with such blindness as to the signs of their own times!"§ It certainly is to be regretted, that so many writers should persist in regarding every passing occurrence as of paramount importance, and in so dogmatically tracing

\* The oft recurring *mystical* period of 42 months, or 1260 days, (not, years.) I must confess my inability to understand the force of the argument in favor of the *year-day* theory, or to reconcile the vague hypothesis with undoubted facts.

† Dan. vii. 25, 26.

‡ 2 Thess. ii. 7, 8: Isaiah xi. 4. See Psalm x. 15, 16.

§ Hippolytus V. 3, p. 355.

in the uncertain present the incipient fulfilment of the grandest predictions,\* unmindful of the experience of former enquirers; and thus again provoke the scoffs of infidels by their unwarranted conjectures,† and incongruous interpretations of connected symbols.‡ But if we learn caution from the extravagance of these speculations, let it not be to abandon the principles of sober criticism and watchful observation, or to trace in these days of abounding evils, baffled hopes, and daring scepticism, a growing fulfilment,§ either of divine revelation, or of human anticipations of promised blessedness.||

\* It has been well said, the enthusiast does not recognise the slowness of the pace of time, and that an event not immediately connected with the time in which he lives is to him a nullity.

† Such as connecting Sebastopol and Armageddon, *both* probably misinterpreted. As if the Apocalypse had not been written in Greek, and as if Hebrew names were not always descriptive and characteristic.

‡ Such as referring the Euphrates to Turkey, and Babylon, the city built on the banks of that river, to Rome.

§ Bunsen, however, strangely exclaims: "The apostles of darkness cannot withstand the second Reformation, which draws near in the armour of divine light, and with the weapons of eternal conscious reason, which is fortified by science, philosophy, and authentic history; the approach of which is anticipated and hailed by the universal longing of nations, yearning after Christianity, and evangelical truth and liberty." Hippolytus V. 4, p. 114. We are not insensible indeed to some cheering symptoms of awakening and inquiry, nor unthankful for the effectual doors opened out to the Gospel in many directions; but these are but partial: and, as of old, "there are many adversaries." 1 Cor. xvi. 9.

|| The view of Zanchius, that the true Antichrist (*κατ' ἐξοχὴν*) is yet to be revealed, and that the Pope is but a type and earnest



Jesus himself authoritatively assured the High Priest, that "hereafter they should see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven;" and his enemies, at once understanding the allusion, looked upon their prisoner as a blasphemer, and summarily condemned him to death.\* But he had previously said that the temple should remain desolate, and that the Jews should not see Him again, until they cry, in the language of the Psalmist, "blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!"†

This cry has never yet been heard from Israel. The veil is still upon their hearts.‡ Zion is ploughed as a field;§ mosques occupy and profane the site of the demolished temple; Jerusalem is trodden down by the Gentiles.|| The land, once the glory of all lands, flowing with milk and honey, lies desolate, covered with briars and thorns,¶ or badly cultivated, without flocks, or herds, or bees; for the rain is withheld, and the grass is withered. A scattered people wander amongst all the nations of the earth, without a king

of what shall be manifested in greater power and concentrated blasphemy in the last days, was regarded as not improbable by the Reformers of Zurich, who investigated the subject at the time of its promulgation. See Beausobre's note on 2 Thess. ii. 8, from Hottinger Hist. Eccl. T. viii. p. 844.

\* Matt. xxvi. 64—66.

† Id. xxiv. 38, 39, Psalm cxviii. 26, *not in Luke*.

‡ 2 Cor. iii.

§ Micah iii. 12.

|| Luke xxi. 24.

¶ Isaiah xxxii. 12—15; vii. 23—25.

or a prince, without a sacrifice and without an image, without an ephod and without teraphim,\* pining away in the anguish of disappointed hopes, and yet fondly cherishing a faint prospect,—as they cast a lingering eye, or turn a weary foot, towards the land of promise, —of deliverance long deferred, but not to be for ever denied.

Are we to anticipate no change? The prophets are often said to describe nothing but a figurative past, or a spiritual present; but as we know that they *literally* foretold the degradation of Israel and of their holy city, no intelligible principle of criticism will justify any other than a literal interpretation of those connected passages, in which, like Hosea,† they proceed to depict their restoration under the symbolical David, the true Beloved of Jehovah.

Nor do the apostles permit us to question this. Jerusalem is to be trodden down, not, for ever, but *until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*.‡ The Lord

\* Hosea iii. 4.

† iii. 5. See Ezek. xxxvi. and xxxvii.; Jerem. xxx. 7—9; 17, 18; xxxii. 37—41, &c.

‡ Luke xxi. 24. So Isaiah describes the desolation of the land as continuing, *until* the outpouring of the Spirit.—xxxii. 15. He cannot refer to the *Pentecostal* gifts; for the desolation is yet unchanged. We therefore anticipate the greater outpouring at the completion of the Harvest, of which those were *the first fruits*, in the approaching feast of Tabernacles. (Cf Zech. xiv.) The language of Joel requires a more enlarged fulfilment. Three thousand converts, (Acts ii. 41,) were but an earnest of a nation, to be born (again) in a day. Isaiah lxvi. 8.

did not say, that he would *not* “restore the kingdom to Israel,” but that “the times and the seasons” were not to be revealed to his inquiring disciples.\* The eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans is unmistakable.† God has not cast off his people for ever. The Gentiles have been grafted in, because of their unbelief, but they must not be puffed up on that account. The ways of the Lord are deeply mysterious. “Blindness in part has happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:—for the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable.”

When that time comes, the Redemption of the world will be complete, and the righteous kingdom of the Messiah shall be triumphantly established for ever. He will gather together his elect, and they shall shine forth as the Sun.‡ He will build up Zion, and reign in Jerusalem, (the manifested throne of Jehovah,) and before his ancients, gloriously, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.§ Wars shall cease throughout the earth, and his people shall all be righteous, and dwell together in perfect security, and in unfailling peace.||

\* Acts i. 6, 7.

† Vers. 25, 26; 29.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 31; xiii. 43; Malachi iii. 17; Judges v. 31.

§ Isaiah xxiv. 23; Jer. iii. 17; Psalm cii. 13—22; Psalm lxvii. &c.

|| Isaiah ii. 2—4; Micah iv. 1—4; Zech. iii. 9, 10; Isaiah lx. &c. Are not Christ in his grace and glory, and Jerusalem or Israel in its

The irrepressible tendencies of the human mind, ever groaning, and as it were travailing in pain to bring forth a more glorious era of liberty and happiness, and to redress and abolish existing evils, cause the world gladly to acquiesce in such pleasing prospects, or even spontaneously to pourtray some coming hero, before whom it already bows, though only the phantom of an excited imagination, as the author of such a Millennium. A Roman poet celebrates the birth of a child in fulsome panegyric, and his glowing strains announce the actual advent of a golden age, of which that poor infant was the supposed harbinger! Expectations of some coming crisis were generally diffused,\* when the wise men saw the mysterious star in the East, and came to Bethlehem to worship the long anticipated king of the Jews. In a few years, the Herald publicly proclaimed his Advent, and exhorted the people to prepare to meet and welcome Him, in humility and genuine contrition of soul. Men flocked eagerly to the Baptism of John, anxiously expecting the immediate fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers, and pressed into the kingdom of God,† with violence and importunate zeal.

present and future state, the two foci of the Ellipse, in which the cycle of prophecy is completed? Every recorded prediction has more or less direct reference to these two themes; none to Gentile history as such, independently of Israel.

\* Suetonius Octav. 94; Vesp. 4; Tacitus Hist. l. 5; Heyne on Virgil Eccl. 4.

† That is, into the church, or introductory dispensation of the

But, for the most part, they overlooked the cross, which precedes the crown, and mistook the character of the king; and therefore they either rejected Him in scornful unbelief, or, after cherishing eager hopes for a time, stumbled at the apparent contradictions in his career. The kingdom was not to "come with observation," or with outward pomp, nor yet was it to be manifested *immediately*, as even his disciples fondly hoped. It would neither propagate itself by worldly weapons, nor by carnal means, nor exercise any authority or control over the governments of the world, except so far as they voluntarily conform to its doctrines, and rule by its laws. For it was not "of this world," but of heaven; not "from hence," but from above. No man could either see or enjoy it, without a heavenly birth, or the sanctifying grace of the quickening Spirit, emptying him of all self dependence and creature idols, and making him really humble, or "poor in spirit." Its earliest manifestations were seemingly insignificant as a grain of mustard seed, internal, invisible, and spiritual; exclusively realised by those, whom the Father drew unto the Son, and thus exalted to the enjoyment of redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,\* as the earnest of future triumphs. For it was ordained to prevail first in distinguishing

Gospel, the vestibule of the royal palace, or the peculiar domain, in which as an earnest of future Empire the King reveals Himself, and exercises a gracious superintendence.

\* Coloss. i. 12—14.

grace, and then to ripen into promised glory; when the king, rejected of that generation, having gone away, as in the parable, to receive his kingdom, shall *return* to execute vengeance upon those, who obstinately refuse to acknowledge Him, to make all his enemies his footstool, and to bestow the inheritance upon his saints.

No doubt the language of the prophets may often seem to be ambiguous. Events are connected together without any note of the distinction of time, which to the all seeing Spirit would be as nothing, though really separated by an interval of ages; partly to adapt them to the circumstances of those specially addressed, and, partly, because the delay was one, humanly speaking, only occasioned by the unbelief and sin of the people. It was, at least, necessary that the exact era of the final consummation should be concealed,\* that it might be the object of hope, and of prayerful desire, in every age of the church.

A striking illustration of double prophecies seems to be supplied by the phenomena of the heavens. It is well known that many bright stars, which appear single to the naked eye, in consequence of their immense distance, really consist of two or more distinct bodies, of various magnitudes, and sometimes "tinged with colour, occasionally in beautiful contrast, and so strongly as to attract attention, immediately the eye is placed at the telescope." In many instances, one of the two stars

\* To stimulate us to the more constant exercise of virtue, and more habitual preparedness of soul. Chrysost. T. viii. p. 619.

revolves round the other, or, rather round their common centre of gravity, in periods, varying from thirty-six to several hundred years. Is it not even thus with the prophecies? The careless reader regards them as one, having respect to a single series of closely connected events; but they constitute, at least, a *binary system*. The magnitude of the more important central points varies also considerably, but they necessarily depend one upon another, inseparably linked together by the will of the Father, in whose sight a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years, as one day. It is only the telescope of faith, which enables us accurately to discriminate them, and their varying colours, in striking contrast of suffering and of honour, of grace and of glory, of manifested meekness, loveliness, and gentleness, or, of fiery indignation, and royal pomp.

But it is the latter, on which, as a promise of joy,\* the attention is now fixed, when the Lord will come forth again to make up his jewels, or to judge the quick and dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, and when he will publicly acknowledge his adopted ones, here humbled under his mighty hand, and “beautify the meek with salvation.”†

Now the church is too often betrayed by false brethren, and the name of our Father is blasphemed

\* Involving, as Augustine also noted, all the promises specified in the following Beatitudes. See vers. 19, 20; vi. 10; 32; vii. 21. Luke xii. 32.

† Psalm cxlix. 49. See below on ver. 5.

on their account, whilst tribulation and suffering are more or less continually our portion, as the changes of the world oppress, harrass, and distract us; but then the reign of God will be displayed in the open triumph of righteousness and truth, in the removal of all heart-burnings and contentions, in the fulfilment of all holy desires, and in the extinction of all temptations, in the general recognition of the Sons of God, and in the redemption of their bodies, amidst universal shouts and hallelujahs of joyous praise. No sickness will any more try, no sorrow shall any more weary, no sin shall any more defile, the happy servants of Jehovah. They shall reign in glory, and the world at large shall become the theatre of manifested love, the witness of his truth, and the portion of His choice.

*“Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.”* (v. 4.)\*

Humility characterises the highest intelligences of heaven. They veil their faces and their feet in lowliest adoration of their glorious Creator. The Son of Man himself was meek and lowly in heart, living in habitual dependence, in loving communion with the Father of lights; and a vestment of humility will adorn his disciples in their highest exaltation, as they cast their crowns before the feet of their Lord. But affliction and sorrow are the fruits of sin, the consequences of our lost

\* Contrast Luke vi. 25. Not that all sorrow is blessed; for the sorrow of the world worketh death. 2 Cor. vii. 10.



and depraved condition; they cannot enter the realms of light. They only darkened the countenance of our Emmanuel, and pierced his loving spirit, because He entered fully into sympathy with his disciples, and pitied the infatuated sinners perishing before him, or took upon himself our burden and our curse for a season, that he might release and redeem us for ever. In us poverty of spirit and contrition of soul are here inseparable. None are truly humble but those who mourn for their sins, in the distinct realisation of their bitterness and shame. Neither can any fully rejoice in the salvation of God, or really look upon Him, whom they have pierced, but those who groan within themselves in deep self abasement at the remembrance of their unfaithfulness, and of their evil returns for all His mercies. The holier we become in the eyes of men, the more earnest our yearnings after perfection, the more hateful and distressing will the sense of our inherent corruptions necessarily prove to ourselves. But like the bitter herbs, with which the children of Israel gave a relish to the flesh of the Paschal Lamb, these feelings will the more endear the Saviour to us, and enable us to abide in Him with the greater delight. For such *godly sorrow* deepened by the actual experience of His consolations, and by the clearer knowledge of that unfailing love, which so gloriously triumphs over our remaining imperfections, and heals our backslidings, invariably becomes the source of more ardent affection, and of more admiring devotion to His service.

Rutherford well says, "it bodes God's mercy to complain heartily for sin. Faith hath sense of sickness. Seek a broken heart for sin:—without that, there is no meeting with Christ."

It is evident that a careless, light-hearted professor cannot be walking very closely in the steps of the Man of sorrows, who wept with such intense sympathy over guilty Jerusalem.\* Jeremiah,† the Psalmist,‡ and the apostle Paul,§ have set us affecting examples of similar commiseration for perishing sinners, in "continual sorrow and heaviness of heart." Let not refined or apathetic selfishness deceive us. The Lord reserves his mark for those who cry, and who sigh, as Ezekiel describes it,|| for the abominations around them, as they contemplate the sins, the follies, and the miseries, of the world in which they live, and the dishonour thus done to their Lord, whom it "crucifies afresh and puts to an open shame." Such sorrow stimulates at once to prayer and to holy exertions, if that, by any means, we may yet arrest the progress of sin, and rescue its slaves from destruction.

But not only so; sorrow is often occasioned by a loving Father, as a means of recalling a wandering child, or of preventing his wandering. "For if we be without chastisement, whereof *all* are partakers, then

\* Luke xix. 41.      † ix. 1; xiii. 17.      ‡ Psalm cxix. 136.

§ Rom. ix. 1, 2. Cf 2 Cor. ii. 4; vi. 10; Acts xx. 19, (serving the Lord with all humility and many tears.)

are we bastards and not sons.”\* The dross must be consumed; the idol of our hearts must be broken; the rising emotions of pride and vainglory must be suppressed; but the furnace is hot, the idol is precious, the cause of our pride is bound up as it were with our very being. No chastisement can be joyous; but “blessed is the man whom the Lord chastens;” blessed is he who mourns under his rod.† “He will not contend for ever, neither will He be always wroth, lest the spirits should fail before Him, and the souls which He has made.”

It is therefore, “good to be afflicted,” and withdrawn for a season from the hurry and confusion of a disordered world, and the anxieties of active life, to commune with our God, and with our own spirits, on a bed of sickness; and at any cost to find His Name and service endeared to us. Affliction thus becomes a token of his favor, and a proof of his faithfulness, and brings us to a deeper sense, and more cheering conviction of his love. For, as it is written in Isaiah, “I will restore comforts unto his mourners,” so the Lord here says, “blessed are they that mourn; for they

\* Heb. xii. 9.

† Affliction is a great blessing. Chrysost. T. viii. p. 566; 778. See Job v. 17, 18; Hosea v. 15; vi. 1; Rom. v. 3—5, &c. “A Father always mingles the cup and holds the rod.” Whatever the Christian may lose, he always retains infinitely more than he has lost; for, as Howe observed, “the principal causes of our joy are immutable, such as no supervening thing can alter.”

shall be comforted." A rich provision is already made for them. "The Father of mercies, the God of all comfort," is their covenant God, and He will never forsake his people, "poor and afflicted" as they are. The apostle beautifully attests this, by reference to his own experience. His flesh and spirit had no rest on account of his anxiety for the Corinthian church: "nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you;"\* for their godly sorrow had brought forth the precious fruits of true repentance.† On another occasion, Epaphroditus, his brother and companion in labour, was sick nigh unto death; "but God had mercy on him, and not on him only," but, as he emphatically adds, "on me also, lest I should have *sorrow upon sorrow*;"‡ or, lest the waves should overwhelm him! Grace, moreover, has confirmed His word in marvellous condescension with an oath, that the blessing of strong, yea, of everlasting consolation, might be bestowed upon the heirs of promise,§ and thus strengthen them for their work and warfare.

When the cry of confession and of godly sorrow rises in the ears of the God of Sabaoth, the still small voice of his Spirit comes forth to "speak to their hearts." When they bow to the rod, mercy withdraws the hand

\* 2 Cor. vii. 6, 7.

† 2 Cor. vii. 9—11.

‡ Phil. ii. 25—27.

§ Heb. vi. 13—18, with 2 Thess. ii. 16.

of correction.\* Whilst they intercede with a heavy heart for fellow sinners, God manifests his delight in the prayer of the upright, by supplies of sustaining grace, or by special tokens of his love.

Now, indeed, the clouds often return after the rain; but soon our warfare will be accomplished; for the kingdom is at hand. And then, when Jesus comes, all threatening floods will subside for ever, as a morning without clouds opens upon us, when a Father's hand will wipe away all tears from our faces, and consummate the joy, now anticipated by faith, in His own presence. For "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."† Let not then the believer faint. We have "heard of the patience of Job," and we "have seen the end of the Lord, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy;"‡ but He has the same thoughts of peace towards all his saints. They shall not only drink of the river of his pleasures, but enter into the very "joy of the Lord."§

*"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."* (v. 5.)||

\* "Let our Lord's sweet hand square us, and hammer us, and strike off the knots of pride, self love, world worship, and infidelity. If ye would have present comfort in trouble, be much in prayer." Rutherford.

† Psalm xcvi. 11.

‡ James v. 11. See Job. xxxiii. 12—30; xxxiv. 31, 32.

§ Matt. xxv. 21, 23. See John xvi. 22; Psalm xxxvi. 8.

|| Lachmann and Tischendorf place this verse before ver. 4, as it appears in the Vulgate and in Augustine. "What earth?" Chrysostom denies that it can be, as some pretend, a mere intellectual or symbolical earth. T. vii. p. 137.

The temper of mind, here indicated, as defined by Aristotle,\* is properly opposed to irritability of temper; but it is often considered in a double sense, in relation to God, as well as to our fellow men.† In either case, it necessarily arises from a humble and contrite spirit, mourning over manifold imperfections, and deeply conscious of absolute dependence upon the Father of mercies, for the continuous supply of all our need, and for our preservation from that evil, which might have been justly inflicted upon us for our sins, as well as for that preventing grace, by which alone we have been made to differ from the ungodly around us.

The meek are not easily provoked, but endure wrong without any desire of revenge, and suffering without fretting or repining,‡ alike calm in trial, and gentle in their dealings with their fellows, because they have an habitual command over their own spirits.§

It is recorded in the book of Numbers, that Moses excelled all men in this grace.|| This was specially exhibited in his patience, under the affront offered to him by Miriam and Aaron, and in his intercession for his sister, when chastened on this account by his God,

\* Eth. Nic. ii. 5; Rhet. ii. 3.

† Augustine limits it to the latter sense.

‡ Chrysostom dwells upon the patience of Isaac, ever yielding without a struggle to the servants of Abimelech, and permitting them to seize his wells. Gen. xxvi. See on ver. 39.

§ "Anger is dissolved by meekness." Chrysost. T. viii. p. 500. See on ver. 22.

|| A fruit of the Spirit. Gal. v. 23.

(chap. xii.) But even he failed in this particular; for when the Israelites once more provoked him at Meribah, he spake unadvisedly with his lips, "hear now, *ye rebels*; must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" This failure caused his exclusion from the land of promise,\* not only as a solemn warning to us, but as a signal proof, that, under a covenant of works, no flesh living could be justified. For as the "commandment is exceeding broad," we here *see* clearly exemplified, in this most faithful servant of Jehovah, "an end of all perfection"† in the creature, that we may seek that in Emmanuel alone. But meekness is that characteristic of His spotless humanity, which was most conspicuous in all his dealings with his immediate disciples, and which is prominently presented to our notice, in his own gracious invitation to the weary and heavy laden, to encourage them to learn from Him, and to take his yoke upon them. He will bear with our infirmities, and multiply his pardons, and thus teach us to exhibit the same lovely disposition in our dealings with our fellows, as we continually experience his precious "meekness and gentleness." This indeed was the plea, by which St. Paul emphatically besought the Corinthians to yield the readier submission to his authority and rebuke, because he knew the power with which such an appeal must come home to every spiritual

\* Num. xx. 3—13; Deut. iii. 23—27; Psalm cvi. 32, 33; Num. xxvii. 12—14; Deut xxxii. 48—52.

† Psalm cxix. 96.

mind.\* The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is very precious in the sight of God; and though it is more peculiarly so in the weaker sex,† it must mark every follower of the Lamb, “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, nor threatened, when he suffered, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously,” for an ensample unto us.

The Psalmist had said, “the meek ‡ shall inherit *the earth*, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace;”§ and our Lord here repeats the first declaration, which might seem, at first sight, more applicable to the Jew. But the apostle tells us, that the Patriarchs dwelt in Canaan, the land of promise, as strangers and pilgrims, because they desired a better country, that is an heavenly, or a city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. Stephen had previously called the attention of the Jews to the startling fact, that God gave Abraham no inheritance in the land,

\* 2 Cor. x. 1. See Gal. vi. 1; and Matt. xii. 19, 20, with 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

† 1 Peter iii. 4. See ii. 21—23; Isaiah liii. 7, &c.

‡ Such a one could safely possess all things. Chrysost. T. vii. p. 138. In one sense “all things” are the Christian’s even now, 1 Cor. iii. 21—23; but he does not yet reign. Id. iv. 8, &c.

§ Psalm xxxvii. 11. The figurative interpretation, which some adopt as profound, appears to be fanciful and unnatural. The benefit is future. It is an *inheritance* in prospect, not a possession in hand. See Psalm cxlix. 4 with Gen. xlix. 18. In Psalm xxii. 26, we read, “the meek shall eat and be satisfied.” Compare Joel ii. 26, 27, with the whole context there, as future in its primary sense.



no, not so much as to set his foot on, though it was the subject of His explicit promise.\*

But in that promise all his spiritual seed are equally interested; for the apostle tells the Galatians, that, if we be Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise: and this, in the epistle to the Romans, is said to be the inheritance of "*the world*." We elsewhere read, that God has not put *the world* to come, or, the future *inhabited* earth whereof we speak, in subjection unto the angels:† but that is really the inheritance of Christ,‡ over which He will reign gloriously in the Regeneration.§

It is evident, therefore, that although Moses was excluded from Canaan, he has not forfeited the higher "recompense of the reward," for which he waited, and which grace invariably bestows upon the hand of faith. His vision from Pisgah, no doubt, comprised a nobler prospect than the land stretching before him. It was an earnest to a spiritual eye, looking through the symbol to the glorious antetype, of the kingdom of Christ, and of that "new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,|| *over which* the saints shall reign with Him, in the day of the Lord.¶

\* Heb. xi. 9—16; Acts vii. 4, 5.

† Gal. iii. 29; Rom. iv. 13; Heb. ii. 5.

‡ See Psalm ii. &c.

§ Matt. xix. 28. The ancient Stoics expected convulsions and reformations of the visible creation at stated periods. We anticipate a change, when all these things shall be dissolved, to be restored in greater beauty and perfection, as the inheritance of the risen saints.

|| See 2 Peter iii. 13.

¶ See Heb. xi. 39, 40; Dan. xii. 13, &c.

*“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness;\* for they shall be filled.” (v. 6.)*

We are familiar with the longing, insatiable desires of many, whom we see striving with all their energies to accumulate wealth or power, or to attain to honour and distinction amongst their fellows; and we turn with complacency to the nobler few, who seem to pant after the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake, or to “hunger and thirst” for the amelioration of society, and the welfare of mankind. But the Lord here directs our attention to those, whose aims and aspirations are yet higher and purer, who can rest satisfied with nothing short of that righteousness, the necessity and beauty of which their minds have once realised. It is written in Deuteronomy, “it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to *do all* these commandments *before* the Lord our God, *as He* hath commanded us;” (vi. 25,) and this perfect conformity to the divine law is sought by these happy ones, as “the necessary food” of their souls.† For however admirable and characteristic any one grace, or virtue, may be, it cannot stand alone,‡.

\* Augustine refers to John vi. 26—65; 1 Cor. i. 30, applying this Beatitude to a longing after Christ Himself. But such an application would be alike unsuitable to the context, and to the circumstances and object of the Preacher. Chrysostom considers this an anticipation of vii. 12. T. vii. p. 156.

Observe that in Luke vi. 21, we only read “blessed are ye that hunger now;” without the qualification here expressed.

† See Zeph. ii. 3; Prov. xxi. 21.

‡ Philo compares the inseparable union of different virtues to that

Perfect moral health, perfect moral beauty, a form without one blemish, or distortion, or variation from the pure ideal realised by the imagination, may have been faintly depicted by the poet, or by the artist of highest spirituality; but the world has only actually witnessed one such glorious model, in the person of the Lord Jesus Himself. He had meat to eat which his disciples knew not of; it was to do the will of Him that sent him, and to finish His work. Such was his actual experience, his present enjoyment, refreshing to His spirit, indispensable to His being. For He alone knew no sin; and therefore when the Tempter came, he found *nothing* in Him, on which he could work, or which he could render subservient to his evil mind; because He was already "filled" with righteousness, and His whole life, in word and deed, was a perpetual manifestation of this. But however anxious we may be to please Him, and to maintain "a conscience void of offence towards God and man,"\* we continually *offend*, and that too "in many things."† For although we "delight in His law after the inner man," because *that* has been written by His

of the mythic graces. Whoever possesses one of them must possess them all; for virtue is really one and indivisible. (Vit. Moys l. 2 c. 1; de Sacrif. Ab. and C. § 37.) Compare James ii. 19. Chrysostom says, in illustration of this moral truth, that it is insufficient to touch one string of the lyre, if we desire to produce harmony. T. v. p. 4.

\* Acts xxiv. 16; xxiii. 1; Heb. xiii. 18; 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4; 2 Cor. i. 12.

† James iii. 2. An infinite variety of things defile the soul: Job xiv. 4: it is impossible, says Philo, to wash them all away.

own Spirit, according to the tenor of His new Covenant, on the fleshly tablets of our hearts, in characters of ardent love, we are not only severely tried and harrassed by various temptations, in an unceasing conflict with ourselves, and with an evil world, but too often betrayed by inherent frailty and sin. If therefore we say that we have *not sinned*, we make God a liar;\* and, if we say that we have *no sin*, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.† We can only hunger and thirst after the meat and drink of the perfect, and labour to the utmost of our power to attain to the same holy standard,‡ in deep consciousness of our own insufficiency.

We shall not labour in vain; for our Lord here says of all such, “they shall be filled,” or satisfied.

Even now the Christian is righteous before God; for he is justified by faith. This was the privilege of Abraham, as attested by Moses in the passage, so prominently alleged by St. Paul to establish the cardinal doctrine of his Gospel.§ The Psalmist gives concurrent testimony, *describing* “the blessedness of the man, to whom God imputeth righteousness without works,” and rejoicing in the free pardon of all his sins.|| But the

\* 1 John i. 10.

† *Id.* 8: necessarily to be explained by reference to Romans vii.

‡ “We dream not of purchasing heaven by our obedience, but the hand of obedience alone receives it.” *Howels*.

§ Gen. xv. 6; Rom. iv. 3, &c.; Gal. iii. 6.

|| Psalm xxxii. 1, 2; ciii. 1—3, &c.

language of the prophet Isaiah is most explicit, and becomes the more precious and consolatory to the attentive reader, who observes that the announcement of privilege immediately precedes the most earnest invitation to every one that thirsteth, to "come without money and without price to the waters,"—the place of traffic,—and buy the choicest blessings of the kingdom.\* There is no separation from Christ; there is no condemnation to those who abide in Him. The security and glory of the Church, so wonderfully unfolded in the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, is summarily expressed in one verse by the prophet. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." But of whom is this written? "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord." There is no distinction of Jew and Gentile; for we afterwards find a special promise to the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to Jehovah, to serve Him and to love His Name, and to be His servants. His household is but one: He has no respect of persons. But wherefore? "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." It is no human work; it is no incomplete, or tarnished robe. Mark the vision of Zechariah. See Joshua clothed with filthy garments, standing before the angel, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist

\* Isaiah liv. 17; lv. 1. This affords a very striking illustration of the necessity of disregarding the artificial divisions of the Scriptures into chapters, often so miserably and ignorantly arranged.

him. Is he not a counterpart of the poor prodigal, returning in rags and filth, with a polluted heart, a guilty conscience, and a contrite spirit, to throw himself upon the mercy of his father, in agonising confession of his vileness and sin? He is a brand plucked from the burning; he has been brought to himself by the mysterious drawings of an unseen Father; and now the filthy garments are taken from him, once and for ever; for the Lord, who chose Jerusalem, has caused his iniquity to pass from him; and, "the best robe" is in requisition; it is brought forth, and Joshua and the prodigal are alike clothed in change of raiment, "a robe of righteousness, and a garment of salvation,"—the fruit of the work of Emmanuel, and therefore—fit apparel for those, whom the king delights to honour, the accepted guests at the Bridal feast!

It is no otherwise than as the Gospel more clearly reveals this precious truth, "even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe," that it becomes the power of God unto salvation to perishing sinners.\* This stimulated the zeal, and inflamed the grateful love of the apostle. For although he was outwardly blameless, "touching the righteousness, which is in the law," and therefore self satisfied, until he understood *that* in its

\* Justice required and found full satisfaction from Messiah, and claims acquittal for the believer.—He obeyed the command; he honoured the curse. The Father has accepted the sacrifice,—and every one who believes in it. *Howells.*

deeper spirituality, and thus became alive to the consciousness of his sin. Paul then learnt to abandon all that he had previously valued, as really worthless, for the sake of this more excellent treasure. It was henceforth the exclusive aim and desire of his heart "to win Christ, and to be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." And thus he stood, and ever shall stand, *accepted* and complete in Him!\*

But not only so: where righteousness is imputed, it will also be inwrought by the power of the Spirit, who leads every believer in "the highway of holiness." For "in this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whoso doeth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."†

But here (as already stated) fruit is imperfect, and therefore the Christian is ever longing‡ after a closer conformity to the image of his Maker, a more entire abnegation of self, and a more complete mortification of his earthly members, by a heaven-realising spirit. In that day, his blessing shall be consummated in spotless purity and undefiled righteousness.

\* - For God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor. v. 21. If tangent of God, you are living on the falseness of Christ. *Howells*.

† 1 John iii. 10. See below on ver. 16.

‡ Rutherford says, *growth in grace* should be cared for above all things. 2 Peter iii. 18.

*"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." (v. 7.)*

The good Samaritan, in shewing mercy to the Jewish stranger, who was stripped and wounded by robbers on his journey to Jerusalem, manifested that love to his neighbour, which the law enjoined, but which was commonly neglected under some frivolous plea, or pretended uncertainty as to the force of the terms, in which it was prescribed. His example is set before us for our guidance; and surely, if there be one quality more than another, which is lovely and of good report, amongst men of every class, and of every character, and the object of delightful contemplation to heavenly beings, it is that of mercy.\* Even those, who are loath to imitate, are constrained to admire and to praise.

The quality of mercy is not strain'd;  
 It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven.  
 Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd:  
 It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:  
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes  
 The throned monarch better than his crown.  
 ————— We do pray for mercy;  
 And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
 The deeds of mercy.

\* Philo represents this quality as most essential and connatural to a reasonable soul. He says that men should imitate those heavenly bodies, which without grudging minister to all. *de Carit* § 4; *de Septen* § 17. Chrysostom says that no quality is so characteristic of man. *T. viii.* p. 783. Witness our expressive term, *humanity*. This Beatitude, indeed, as Mr. Trench observes, necessarily comprehends "inward sympathies" as well as "outward acts."



Benevolence constituted a beautiful trait in the character of Job. "He was eyes to the blind and a father to the poor, and the cause which he knew not he *searched out*; so that the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him; and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." He was equally considerate to his dependents and to strangers;\* for all that sought his aid, he graciously relieved. Moses, indeed, not only required the Israelites to *love* foreigners, enforcing this precept by reference to their own experience in Egypt,† but prescribed kindness and humanity, even to animals, that he might more effectually "sow the seeds of gentleness and mildness in the minds of the people."‡

The humble Christian, who looks continually to a gracious Redeemer, must needs be benevolent, compassionate, and humane, like Him. The meek can never be censorious. The mourner, with yet unsatisfied hunger and thirst after righteousness, beholds too much evil in himself, and is too much occupied with his own heart, his own warfare against spiritual adversaries, and his own fluctuating course, in the midst of temptations and of difficulties, not to look with indulgence upon others. Without either justifying or palliating any thing evil, he will habitually speak of his neighbours

\* Job xxix. 11—16; xxxi. 13—21; 31, 32. See below on ver. 42.

† Deut. x. 19.

‡ Exodus xxii. 30; Deut. v. 14; xxii. 6, 7, 10; xxv. 4. See Philo de Carit § 18, 19, and Prov. xii. 10.

with kindness, and deal gently with an erring brother,\* or even with a wayward or hostile one, and thus as far as possible exhibit a loving and merciful disposition to every one around him.

The promise is suitable to such a character. The merciful shall reap as they have sown; "they shall obtain mercy." It is true, indeed, that they must have been previously arrested *by preventing grace*,† and thus have been converted and forgiven, through faith, if they belong to the people of God. For all of these have lifted up their hearts under a deep consciousness of sin and misery to the Lord, like the Publican in the parable, and though they may have been naturally cruel, and full of bitterness and fury, they have obtained mercy, through the boundless love of Jesus, and the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit. But they can only retain a comforting and abiding sense of this, in the exercise of a similar feeling towards others; and in proportion as they manifest this feeling, will their assurance become brighter, and their peace flow more abundantly.‡ What-

\* See Gal. vi. 1, &c. Above p. 32.

† Philo distinctly asserts this. Leg. Alleg. l. 3, § 76; and Quæst in Gen. l. 4, § 96. God powerfully liberates man from the cruel despotism of passion and sin, sometimes with, and sometimes *without*, their entreaty. Quis Rev Div Her. § 38. *Turning* (from evil) is not in our own power. Leg. Alleg. l. 2, § 9. It belongs to God alone to sow and to bring forth what is excellent; de Mat. Nom. § 24; or to implant virtue in the soul of man. Leg. Alleg. li. § 15.

‡ See below on vi. 14, 15. As we are the children of mercy, so God intended that we should be the parents of mercy. *Howels*.

ever may have been their past experience, they alike need the multiplication of sustaining and preserving mercy upon their souls, and must wait for its consummation in the crowning mercies of the last day, unto life eternal.\* For if the Lord were extreme to mark what is done amiss, or should enter into strict judgment with his servants, no man living could be saved. Imperfection, indeed, marks every act of faith,† tinges every work of love, and defiles every prayer of their hearts. But mercy spares and provides for them, cancels their faults, accepts, and even rewards, their works, and still compasses them about as with a shield.

Nehemiah prayed, "remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy;" and the Lord sends a general answer to all such petitioners, in the beautiful language of Malachi; "for a book of remembrance is written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name; and they shall be His—in the day when He makes up his jewels; and He will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."‡

\* See Heb. iv. 16; 2 Tim. i. 16; 18; Jude Ep. 21. Philo bids men pray for the continuance of saving mercy. *de Somn.* l. 2. § 21.

† Philo also speaks of imperfections sullyng faith itself: (*de Mat. Nom.* p. 585. ed. M.) the excellency and necessity of which he clearly saw, (*Quis Rev Div Her.* § 18, 19; *vit. Moys* li. § 46,) however difficult.

‡ Neh. xiii. 22; Mal. iii. 16, 17.

*"Blessed are the pure in heart;\* for they shall see God."* (v. 8.)

As the former verse has reference to external conduct, this refers to the state of the heart before God. The thoughts, feelings, and affections must be purified from all worldly and sensual lusts; for "the friendship of the world is enmity with God," and "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."† The most virtuous heathen could scarcely form any notion of this. Pliny the younger not only composed, but recited, impure verses, and deliberately justifies his indulgence, in what he calls every kind of innocent relaxation and amusement, by reference to his human nature, as well as by the similar example of other grave Romans. The knowledge of the Son of God can alone elevate the affections, and purify the heart, and teach men to look

\* See 1 Tim. i. 5; 1 John iii. 3; 2 Cor. vii. 1; Psalm lxxiii. 1; cx. 3; xciii. 5; xcvi. 9; (= 1 Chron. xvi. 29;) Psalm li. 10. Augustine explains the Beatitude as relating to "a single heart," or as Mr. Trench takes it, "a heart without folds." See below vi. 22, 23. Chrysostom refers it either to those who are generally virtuous, conscious to themselves of no (allowed) evil, or to those who live in chastity. T. vii. p. 139, (at p. 155, he compares ver. 28.)

† According to Philo, devout sentiments, the exercises of piety, and the prepared soul, purified from sin, are at once the delight of God, the best and most precious sacrifice, and the most glorious temple of Jehovah. It is thus that man attains to the highest felicity, power to *see* God, who dwells and walks in him, and feeds him with pure wisdom. (de Cherub. § 29; &c. Quæst in Gen. l. 4, § 8; in Exod. l. 2, § 3; fragm p. 672; 661; Quis Rev Div Her. § 15—17.)

with disgust upon the sources of amusement, in which others either openly or secretly indulge. The Proverb says of one, "that loveth pureness of heart," that "for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend."\* He alone can hold communion with the Holy and undefiled One.

The promise to such is inexpressibly sweet: "they shall see God."† It is obvious, as the apostle reminds the Hebrews, that this beatific vision can never be attained without personal holiness.‡ But who can fully estimate the force of the expression? The vision of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good; the immediate presence of the Eternal Father of lights, the full contemplation, not with the corporeal sense, but with the purified eye of the soul, of all His attributes and glories, apprehended and enjoyed, as our unchangeable portion! The mind fails to grasp the illimitable theme; and to paint inadequate conceptions in feebler language would be alike chilling and illusory.

*"Blessed are the Peacemakers; for they shall be called the sons of God."* (v. 9.)

When Moses saw two of his brethren contending together,§ he earnestly strove to reconcile them. For

\* Prov. xxii. 11. See Levit. xix. 2.

† See Psalm xvii. 15; 1 John iii. 2. A dying Christian, in the fulness of her spiritual joy, on hearing the first verse repeated, earnestly exclaimed, "more than satisfied! He satisfies me now!"

‡ Heb. xii. 14. See 1 Thess. iv. 3.

§ Exod. ii. 13; Acts vii. 26.

he could not be satisfied to live meekly himself, as far as possible in peace with all men,\* without desiring to behold all Israel dwelling together in that unity and mutual love, which constitutes alike the strength and the glory of nations and of families, of cities, and of churches. The Psalmist subsequently exhibited a beautiful picture of such brotherly concord, and testified that it is the state which Jehovah crowns with his blessing of "everlasting life."†

The peacemaker, however, has still a large field before him, not only in the world, but even in the church. The inspired proverb declares, that he who sows discord amongst brethren is abhorred of the Lord; but Satan has laboured too successfully to this end. Instead of concentrating our energies on the efforts best calculated to allay the bitter contentions of nations, and to eradicate the feelings of rancorous hatred, that often prevail amongst the unconverted, we are vainly striving to heal the divisions of Israel, and to wipe away the reproach thus cast upon our profession, and the dishonour done to our God, and to remove the obstacles thus raised to the progress of truth, by partial Evangelical Alliances.‡ Nay, unhappy schisms, even in the same

\* Rom. xii. 18. Cf. Psalm xxxv. 20.

† Psalm cxxxiii. 3.

‡ Let it not be supposed that any objection is here made to those Alliances. We only deplore their *necessarily* partial character, and the state of things in which they originate, and which they have mitigated, not corrected.

church, and in the same family, still cause "great searchings of heart;"\* and we may tremblingly ask, are we indeed believers in His Name, who said of old, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another?" Some might perhaps have said, Moses failed, because the law can never make peace, and the Israelites could not have clearly known a reconciled God; but now the Son of God has "made peace by the blood of his cross," and "reconciled all things, whether in heaven or in earth, unto Himself, by his finished work."† And must not his Spirit, or even heartfelt love to his name, and gratitude for the privileges thus vouchsafed to us, constrain his disciples to follow in his steps, mutually forbearing, and mutually conceding?

Let us, at least, do what we can, and, as the apostle bids us, "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."‡ For "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."§ If, after all our efforts, we still fail to reconcile disputants and rivals, we shall not forfeit the privilege || annexed to this work of christian love.

\* Judges v. 15, 16.

† Coloss. i. 20.

‡ Rom. xiv. 19: Heb. xii. 14; Psalm xxxiv. 14; 1 Peter iii. 11.

§ James iii. 14—18.

|| It seems erroneous to extend this to the attempt to diffuse the higher peace of God, (Trench p. 176,) however sacred the obligation to do this may be; for in that sense Christ alone is, or can be, a *Peace-maker*. Tertullian de Pudicit. v., reads "pacifici," as the Vulgate, &c.

For of the peacemakers alone it is here emphatically said, "they shall be called the Sons of God;" as they most directly tread in the hallowed steps of Jesus himself. And yet in reality this privilege of adoption,—though realised more or less distinctly by men of different characters,\*—belongs to all who truly believe in the Name of the Lord, and receive Him as the Christ of God, and who, having been begotten again by the Word of Truth, have spiritually seen and entered into his kingdom on earth. Thus the promises are all really linked together in an unbroken chain, and as precious stones are set in the golden sceptre of love, which the king holds out, not only to the righteous, who have already the characteristics of saints,—that they may persevere in the way of life, until they reach the city of God, with songs of everlasting joy and triumph,—but even to the lost and perishing, whom He invites to come out and separate themselves from the ungodly world, and to renounce every unclean thing, that they also may find pardon and peace in His presence.

\* That is, in whom one or other of the inseparable qualities of true Christians is more particularly developed.



§ 2. *The Special Privilege of the Persecuted.*

*Vers. 10—12.*

INDEPENDENTLY of the glorious results, thus set before the people of God, as immediately connected with their various graces, or moral qualities, the *sevenfold* work of the Holy Spirit, which is only perfect in their combination, the Lord prepares his disciples for the trials which awaited them, by announcing the special privilege of the persecuted.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

This repetition of the promise, addressed in the first instance to the poor in spirit, leads us to regard this verse, as introductory to another subject.\* The humble must not be discouraged, if they suffer here; the meek need not be alarmed, if the proud endeavour to crush them in *this* earth; those that hunger and thirst after righteousness must not be surprised, even if that righteousness expose them to trial. It is thus, that they will become the more closely conformed to the example of the Lord, whom the world hated, and persecuted unto death, and at the same time be more completely weaned from the creature, and taught to anticipate the

\* Augustine similarly regarded it. The perfect man has been fully described on all sides in the previous verses. Trench p. 186.

coming glory with more eager desire. But they will also derive fresh comfort to their souls, and strength to bear their appointed burden, from this confirmatory pledge, that their humble hope shall never be disappointed, and that the inheritance of the kingdom is really theirs. For, as the apostle emphatically says, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, *since*\* we suffer with him, that we may be glorified together:" because, "if we (thus) suffer, we shall also reign with him."<sup>†</sup>

But the Lord here continues individualising his address, "blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake," or "on my account."

The cause of righteousness is that of Christ; none have any part in the beatitude, but those who follow Him, and whose connection with Him occasions their trial. Let nothing alarm or distress you, which awaits you in His service; you are forewarned, and ought to have counted the cost; "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," and thus, "through much tribulation, shall they enter into the kingdom of God."<sup>‡</sup>

\* Rom. viii. 16, 17.

† 2 Tim. ii. 12; 2 Thess. i. 4, 5.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 12; Acts xiv. 22. The testimony of the Psalmist is similar. Psalm xxxiv. 19.

Ungodly men may suffer for conscience sake; but such sufferings entail no honour, and secure no blessing from above. Conscience, unenlightened and uninformed, has raised up martyrs in a thousand cases, who can only be the objects of our pity and compassion, though admired by their immediate partisans, because they are contending, with false and spurious zeal, for a mere illusion of their own minds. Reproach and contumely are never really honourable, except when they are unmerited, and evil is falsely imputed to us, or when our faith and love to Christ are acknowledged, and it is mere hatred to Christ, or contempt of true righteousness, which stimulates our accusers. He who suffers in the advocacy of a false principle, or in the prosecution of a work, to which God has not called him, is no true martyr, but rather a perverse and obstinate fanatic.

Let us therefore beware. An experienced captain was once wrecked on a dangerous coast. Why had he approached so near? Dense fogs prevailed, and a known current, drifting with uncertain velocity, had carried him out of his course, and falsified all his reckonings. The ship perished, but no lives were lost. It may be even so with experienced Christians. The age is one of peculiar peril. Specious error prevails, even "that seeming truth, which cunning times put on, to entrap the wisest." The peculiar temperaments and habits of our minds, the distracting power of which has not been ascertained with sufficient precision, though not

wholly overlooked, may pervert our views, and falsify the testimonies of Scripture, to which we appeal, and thus cause us to make disastrous shipwreck. In such cases, even when the soul is safe, we must be incapable of rejoicing.

But it is not so with him, who is falsely reviled, and who maintains the true course amidst the threats and taunts of his enemies.. The Lord says, "rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

It is, then, a just source of comfort to us to consider, that we are not alone in suffering, that our experience is nothing strange or novel,\* and that we are exposed to no other trials, dangers or hardships, than such as others, holier than ourselves, have patiently endured in former ages. The prophets of the Lord were men of untiring zeal, of unblemished reputation, of pure mind, of lofty demeanour; they were entrusted with a high commission, and they faithfully delivered the message dictated to them by the Spirit of Christ himself. Their visions had been sublime; their strains majestic, tender and eloquent. They felt no bitterness or rancour of spirit, but breathed love and goodwill, even towards the sinners, whom they most vehemently reprov'd. And yet no music of voice, no beauty of style, no consistency of character, could exempt them from re-

\* Chrysost. T. v. p. 39.

proach, persecution and insult, or rescue them from the murderous hands of the professing Israel of God!

Bacon indeed called "prosperity the blessing of the Old Testament, adversity of the New, which carries the greater benediction, and the clearer revelation of God's favor;"\* and he represented the mournful Psalms of David, and the afflictions of Job, as only partially qualifying this assertion. It is, however, sufficiently refuted by the language of our Lord, and the exhortation of St. James,† and by the descriptive catalogue of true heroes in the epistle to the Hebrews.‡ For "they,§ of whom the world was not worthy, were stoned, and sawn asunder, or slain with the sword, and wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, being destitute, afflicted, tormented."

Even Moses had preferred suffering affliction with the people of God, to the transitory pleasures of sin; for he "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than

\* Essays, No. 5. See Chrysost. on Psalm iv.; Opp. T. iii. p. 31, 32. But he says that David received his recompense by faith, not in actual experience. T. v. p. 364, 365, on 2 Cor. iv. 13. Perhaps the weaker multitude were led in one way, and nobler spirits, who already anticipated the philosophy of the New, in another. Id. p. 366. (See Heb. xi. 37; 39; 13.) This suggestion is just. The multitude were carnal, the few spiritual; the first rested in the letter and its shadows; the latter grasped the invisible and eternal reality.

† James v. 10, 11.

‡ And see Psalm lxxiii.

§ Heb. xi. 37, 38.

the treasures of Egypt," because his faith enabled him to apprehend the certainty of a glorious recompense, which however long deferred, is secured to every saint.\*

It is true, that temporal promises and temporal judgments are prominently set forth in the law, as a stimulus to obedience, and as a warning against the fatal effects of sin; but we must look through the national dispensation in the letter to the inner dispensation of grace, ministered, in types and symbols, to a hidden remnant. As a nation, Israel prospered, as long as they continued faithful, and remembered their exalted position, as the people whom the Lord had chosen to himself; but they fell into distress, or experienced the accumulated judgments of famine, pestilence, and war, when they rebelled against their Benefactor, and turned aside to idols. The inspired Proverb now assures us, without limitation, that righteousness exalteth a nation, and that sin is a reproach to *any* people.† (xiv. 34.)

On the other hand, pious individuals have usually been exposed to more or less of contumely, reproach,

\* The longer it is delayed, the more abundant it becomes, increasing as money at interest. Chrysost. T. viii. p. 782. The sustaining power of christian hope is urged by Augustine. Trench p. 179.

† It is a ground of consolation to us, that good and evil are not in our own power, but proceed from the Divine Word, the Pilot and Governor of all, who alternately elevates and depresses nations and individuals, and is (falsely) called Fortune by the world. *Philo* de Cherub § 1; *Quod Deus Immut.* § 36.

and persecution, according to the degree, in which their nation, or the particular generation, in which they lived, had, more or less, apostatised from the Lord, and renounced his righteousness. The history of Moses himself shows, how much he endured for those under his control, as they not only murmured against him, and insulted him by overt acts of rebellion, but, on one occasion, were "almost ready to stone him" in their fury.\* But such persecution is a privilege, to which all are not called, and none, except for the confirmation of the faith, and for the revival of the church at large.

As indeed the Proverb testifies, that, "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his very enemies to be at peace with him," so one apostle inquires, "who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" and another declares, that "he who serves Christ in righteousness, and peace, and spiritual joy, is acceptable to God, and approved of men."† Assured then of our Father's love and wisdom, and knowing that the fiery trial will not befall us, unless *necessary* in his gracious purpose for our everlasting security, or to enhance our final bliss, we may exult if called upon to suffer, in conformity to the prophets of old, and to our heavenly Master himself. For when his glory shall be revealed, we shall rejoice with exceeding joy, in the possession of our promised *reward* in His kingdom !

\* Exodus xvii. 4. Cf. Num. xiv. 10; 1 Sam. xxx. 6.

† Prov. xvi. 7; 1 Peter iii. 13; Rom. xiv. 17, 18.

On the eve of that coming glory, and of the restoration of Israel, Zechariah foretells the destruction of two-thirds of the people by preliminary judgments; but declares that the remnant shall be brought through the fire, and thus be enabled to recognise Jehovah as their God, and to enjoy the privilege of once more becoming his acknowledged people. It is written, "I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call upon my name, and I will hear them." (xiii. 9.) It would seem as if a twofold process were designed: for the two descriptive words in the original are similarly combined in a passage of Jeremiah; "behold, I will *melt* them and *try* them;"\* not as if there was a mere parallelism in these successive clauses, but because the work of the refiner prepares for that of the assayer. It is thus, at least, in the ordinary course of God's dealings with his people. They are refined as silver, and melted, that the precious metal may be separated from the adhering dross, and snatched from the fire, as soon as the workman beholds the clear reflection of his countenance in it, at the critical moment, for which he is anxiously watching. We bring trials upon ourselves by carelessness and manifold transgressions; but these are judgments in love, designed to draw us to God, or chastisements, intended to make us partakers of his holiness, and entirely conformable

\* Jer. ix. 7. But the first word in the Hebrew signifies "try" in Psalm xvii. 3; lxvi. 10, &c.



to his image, that our offerings may be acceptable; and therefore in themselves they are never "joyous, but grievous."\* The apostle indeed says, that "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged of the Lord; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." *Even this*, therefore, is a cause of thankfulness.† It proves that He has not abandoned us to ourselves, as those whom correction would only provoke to mere perverse rebellion of heart, and waywardness of conduct.‡ Observe the loving admonition of the prophet to Israel himself. "Thy silver is become dross,—but I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin."§ For then the faithful city, in which righteousness had lodged, but from whence it was long banished, shall be restored to its original glory, and be once more called the city of righteousness, the faithful city!||

\* Although "the cause of rest" at last: but here we are in a state of perpetual conflict. Chrysost. T. viii. p. 559. Rutherford said, that "the soul grows best in *winter*. Terrors of conscience cast us down, but without them we could not be raised up again. Fears and doubts shake us; and yet without fears and doubtings we should soon sleep and loose our hold of Christ."

† 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32. See Psalm cxix. 75, 67; Psalm xciv. 12, 13; Job v. 17, 18; Deut. viii. 5; Prov. iii. 11, 12; Heb. xii.

‡ See Isaiah i. 5, and Hosea iv. 17.

§ Isaiah i. 22 and 25.

|| Isaiah i. 21 and 26; and see iv. 3, 4, &c. with Prov. xxv. 4, 5. This is all the fruit to take away his sin. Isaiah xxvii. 9. God condescends to human infirmity, and mingles judgment and mercy. Psalm ci. 1. (Philo de Mut Nom.)

But when the refiner has done his work, the assayer may commence his. The gold is *tried*,\* that its purity may be manifested, and its brightness rendered more conspicuous; and this, not the former, is the cause of joy, the subject of the present beatitude, not a rod, but a privilege! It was thus with Abraham, when so mysteriously commanded to go and sacrifice his beloved son, the subject of the divine promise, the only heir of the covenant. Not a murmur, not an unbelieving expression escaped his lips; the journey to Moriah, though it occupied three days, was one glorious and uninterrupted exhibition of strong victorious faith. The internal struggle may have been intense; it was a time for solemn and sublime silence. "They went both of them together;" once only was a short question answered as briefly; and again Abraham and Isaac "went both of them together." But when the trial was completed, and the sincerity and depth of his godly fear had been thus incontrovertibly displayed, Abraham received a fresh token of divine love! It was thus, that Job, in confident reliance upon his own integrity, likewise anticipated, that when God had (sufficiently) tried him, he should come forth as gold; even as St. Peter emphatically declares, that all the manifold temptations of the elect, are thus designed for their good, "that the

\* See Jer. xi. 20, &c.; Job xii. 11; xxxiv. 3; (the ear tries assertions.) Psalm xi. 4.

trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Thus, probably, the first trials of the remnant of Israel will drive away their unbelief, and stubborn foolishness of heart, as godly sorrow brings them to genuine repentance; but this repentance will not ensure their immediate deliverance; it will be yet further *tried*,\* until at last, when its fruits have been clearly manifested, the long anticipated hour will arrive, and the Redeemer will appear in his glory.

Let not the persecuted ones be discouraged. Their reward is great in heaven;† their deliverance is sure, however long it may be delayed. Our false accusers, who can find no occasion or fault against us, except as concerning the law of our God, may cast us into a lion's den; but let us not fear; only let us look more steadily at the things which are not seen, but which are eternal, and realise the faithfulness of him, who shuts the lion's mouth, the common Deliverer of Daniel and of Paul, and thus rejoice in anticipation of speedy triumph.

A contrast, indeed, has been drawn between suffering

\* This seems to be implied by Psalm xlv.: see especially verses 17—23.

† It is a reward of grace, not of debt, as Augustine carefully notes, though it bears relation to what has been done or suffered for Christ's sake on earth. Trench p. 179.



prophets, and suffering apostles. The former grieved; the latter exulted under their trials;\* as in the power of living faith they glorified God in the furnace, and “rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame” for the name of Christ. But Elihu speaks of God, “who giveth songs in the night,”† thus anticipating the experience of the prisoners at Philippi; and it has ever been the rule of the divine government, to give to afflicted saints as much grace, as might be necessary to enable them to bear the appointed trial,‡ and to triumph over it at last.

\* Chrysost. vi. 107, (quoting Rom. v. 3—5, and Acts v. 41;) viii. 550; v. 850; (see Coloss. i. 24; Phil. ii. 17; 2 Tim. iv. 6;) viii. 554, (“for they rejoice more in troubles than in good things;—if any one loves Christ, he understands me!”)

† Job xxxv. 10. See Psalm xlii. 8.

‡ “Support under trial is a more glorious manifestation of the presence of God than deliverance from it. He visits his children in affliction, and puts Himself into their troubles, so that they can even welcome them.” *Howells*. See Isaiah xliii. 2.

## CHAPTER II.

*The Exalted Vocation and Solemn Responsibility  
of the Church.*

HAVING stated in brief but emphatic aphorisms the moral characteristics of the happy people, upon whom "the blessing of the Lord" rests continually in all its fulness, and having encouraged them to bear trials and persecutions in the cause of righteousness with patient hope, in anticipation of a more glorious recompense, at the day of his appearing, Jesus Christ here proceeds to address his disciples, as the first fruits and representatives of his church, in the language of exhortation and warning.

*"Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle,\* and put it under a † bushel, but on a candlestick, ‡*

\* This should be "a lamp."

† The article is definite in the Greek, because there was but one "corn measure," as Campbell renders, in the house.

‡ Read "the lampstand."

*and it giveth light unto\* all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* (v. 13—16.)

There is an important distinction between these symbols.† Salt may preserve meat from corruption, or give a greater relish to what is sound and wholesome in itself; but it cannot change or correct that which is already tainted and corrupt. Light, on the other hand, is introduced to cheer, to direct, and to enlighten those, who would otherwise pine away in the gloom of darkness, and of the shadow of death. The office of the church is also manifold. In the first place, it preserves *the earth* from an immediate curse. This was the special end announced by Malachi, as the object of Elijah's mission, and as the fruit of his success.‡ Ten righteous men would have preserved Sodom itself from destruction; and the language of Isaiah forcibly expresses this unchangeable characteristic of the divine government. "As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, so will I do for my servant's sake, that I may not destroy them all."§

A holy example, even in an isolated individual,

\* Rather "it shines upon all," as this literal rendering brings out the illustration more forcibly.

† See the Latin Homilist. Chrysost. Op. T. vii. p. 806.

‡ Malachi iv. 5, 6.

§ Isaiah lxx. 8.

is seldom without its beneficial results, in arresting the continuous process of mutual corruption, which so rapidly progresses in every large society. When it is more extensively manifested by a band of pious men, it commonly drives the profligate abashed into a corner, or at least strengthens the young and timid in their resolution, and the weak and inexperienced in their warfare against sin; and thus by elevating the tone of society, renders it more prosperous.

In the second place, the loving communion of living saints in the church one with another, is mutually conservative and edifying, and thus reacts upon the world without. For we are not only commanded to "have salt in ourselves, and peace one with another;" but also earnestly exhorted to let our "speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that we may know how we ought to answer every man."\* Mutual exhortations and spiritual conferences not only refresh fellow pilgrims to Zion, and reanimate them in their "work and labour of love," "as iron sharpeneth iron,"† and thus enable them to "hold fast their profession without wavering," but at the same time contribute to increase and mature their actual graces, and to confirm their testimony to the reality and power of the Gospel.

In the third place, the light of the church in the midst of a careless and ignorant world, is an effectual

\* Coloss. iv. 6. See 1 Peter iii. 15.

† Prov. xxvii. 17. See Mal. iii. 16.

means of rousing many slumbering consciences, and of alluring inquirers. Its visible contrasts of peaceful virtue and of living spirituality, proving the certainty of religion and the beauty of holiness, often win converts, or, at least, constrain indifferent spectators to give unto Jehovah "the glory due unto his Name." As the lighthouse enables the mariner in his outward course to shun points of peculiar peril, or to make the harbour of refuge with greater assurance, so old and tried believers "hold forth the word of life," as "burning and shining lamps," and thus at once guide anxious souls to a loving Saviour, and warn their younger brethren of the shoals and quicksands, on which they might otherwise make disastrous shipwreck.

But salt must be sprinkled upon the mass, which is to be preserved or seasoned. An exclusive spirit, eliciting a proud cry, "stand apart, for I am holier than thou," seems to be diametrically opposed to the object of our calling. Too many enthusiasts were driven into the desert in the early ages of the church, by the fond and selfish hope of escaping the moral pestilences, the progress of which they should rather have laboured, by perseverance in well doing, by prayerful admonitions, and by loving counsels, to have mitigated and restrained. Separation, it is true, may be often essential to the maintenance of personal holiness. It is always indispensable to avoid that dangerous familiarity and intercourse with the ungodly, which would confound light and darkness, and lead to fatal compromises or



dangerous alliances, and to a consequent forgetfulness of our strangership upon earth, or to the complete subversion of our profession.\* We have need of much wisdom to direct us in the narrow path, and to enable us to contribute as much as really lies in our power, to the good of our fellow men.† For in dwelling upon the exalted position and heavenly calling of true believers, we must not forget, that if “risen with Christ,” and “made to sit in heavenly places with Him,”‡ they are still called to the more humble office of acting as the salt of *the earth on which* they live.

But nothing is more liable to injury than some rock salt, or more apt to lose its virtue by exposure to the sun and air, or rain, and therefore the Lord closes this symbolical illustration of the position of his people, by a solemn warning, lest they should experience any similar loss, from dread of persecution, or from love of ease, or from any other cause. It has been said that special reference is here made to teachers, and to ministers of religion. But although their ministry renders their influence for good or for evil more extensive, there is nothing at all in the circumstances, or in the contexture, of the discourse before us, to justify any distinction of classes. As far as we can

\* We must endeavour to unite in one view, 1 Cor. v. 9—13; ix. 19—23, and 2 Cor. vi. 14; vii. 1.

† “Let every one of us please *his neighbour* for his good unto edification.” Rom. xv. 2.

‡ Eph. ii. 4—6; Coloss. iii. 1.

ascertain from the order and arrangement of the Gospel of St. Matthew, which appears to be far more exact and systematic than is commonly supposed, the first appointment of the ministry was of subsequent date.\* Every Christian needs the same caution. His character and conversation should be always "seasoned with salt," whatever may be his social position, or his immediate employment. We cannot, therefore, sufficiently deplore the broad line of demarcation, so rashly drawn at an early period† between the clergy and the laity, leading as it did to the further separation of the priesthood and of people, at once so false in theory, and so pernicious in its effects upon the whole church.

Assuredly, however, it will involve us in heaviest condemnation, if, after all our experience and enjoyment of the good word of God, we prove unfaithful, and walk carelessly before Him, or live in the incessant pursuit of gain, or of pleasure, or of worldly honour, in the pride and self sufficiency of our own spirits, reckless of the good of others; or, if whilst we talk with evident relish of sublunary things, we dwell without unction or feeling upon those of God, and thus offer all our spiritual sacrifices *without salt*, in defiance alike of the prohibition of the law, and of the precept of our Lord.‡

\* See Matt. ix. 36—39; x.

† Vani erimus, si putaverimus, quod sacerdotibus non liceat, laicis licere? Nonne et laici sacerdotes sumus? Tertull. de Exh. Cast. vii. Cf. de Monog. xii. (citing Rev. i. 6.)

‡ Levit. ii. 13; Mark ix. 50. The abiding savour "of Christ within us, the hope of glory," is essential. See Coloss. i. 27.

What more can possibly be done for us? We have the word of truth in our mouths, and the gifts and the illumination of the Spirit in our minds. The beautiful crystallisation of the salt remains, but its characteristic savour is gone; evaporated by intercourse with the world, or marred by the force of temptation. What can reach our hearts, and give us a sense of the power of religion, or impart the grace and love of Jesus to our souls, if all that we have experienced has failed to do so? The Gospel loses its charm with its novelty. It falls on ears wilfully closed, or appeals to hearts, which have trifled away all its admonitions. Those, who should have preserved others from evil, and "ministered grace to their hearers," and elevated the tone of Christian society, are become inaccessible to gracious influences themselves. How can they be renewed unto repentance? The ungrateful soil, watered from heaven in vain, bears nothing but briers and thorns; it must therefore be rejected, as "fitted unto cursing;" its "end is to be burned." The farmer can bestow no more labour upon it; he abandons it in despair, or indignation;\* it is "good for nothing."

But the Lord's warning seems more particularly to refer to the failure of the collective body on the earth. How soon the work of the Baptist, and even of the Messiah Himself, was marred and corrupted by external influences. How soon the visible church, so

\* See Heb. vi. 4—8, with Isaiah v.

pure, so lovely, so prosperous, as it appeared on the first days of Pentecostal vigour, was defiled by false brethren, distracted by vainglorious professors, and rent by schisms. The church of Sardis had lost its saltiness, even in the days of St. John, so that it had little more than a name to maintain; for life was already extinct, save in a very small remnant of its members; and now *the very city*, in which it languished without savour, is a scene of utter desolation. Complacently as the Laodiceans also rested in their lukewarm profession, they were even then rejected with peculiar indignation by the Lord, as blind, and poor, and miserable, and naked, though still lovingly invited to repent; and nothing now remains of their once proud and stately *city*. And thus, notwithstanding the faithfulness of a scanty and hidden remnant, the savour of Christianity itself seemed, for many generations, to have evaporated in the midst of opposing elements; and the triumph of visible evil again threatened the ruin of mankind, and the desolation of *the earth*. For an apostate church, immersed in superstition, ignorance and sin, was trodden under foot by a scornful world, and justly so, because no longer interested in any beatitude; even as Jerusalem has so long been oppressed by hostile nations, for a solemn warning to succeeding ages. The security, doubtless, of a country is still connected with the faithfulness of the church planted in it.

The Jew had vainly gloried in his outward privileges,

amidst all his moral degradation, and boasted that he was "a guide of the blind, a light of those who were in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes," though the veil was still upon his own heart, and he neither understood the Scriptures, nor recognised the promised Messiah, when He actually appeared. But what he failed to be,—God's witness and God's light to the nations of the world,—that Jesus here calls his disciples. The name of the Father had been blasphemed on account of the iniquity of Israel; it was to be glorified through the faith, and the holiness, and the self denial, of the Christian church, as this was "predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ, as the first-born among many brethren," and to "show forth the praises of Him, who called it out of darkness into his marvellous light." But the church does this most effectually, when it walks before God in all humility and meekness and love, in entire subordination to its living Head, anxiously treading in his footsteps.

The various offices of Christ and of his people, in this respect, are beautifully prefigured by the sun and the moon, as the one was originally appointed to rule the day, and the other the night. "The Sun of Righteousness," as we rejoice to remember, once visited this benighted world, as "the Dayspring from on high;" and thrice happy were those who, while He was with them, believed in the Light, and thus became the children of light, and enjoyed the light of everlasting



life, in the irradiation of his love.\* But he speedily set, as it were, behind a bank of threatening clouds; and He shall not rise again in his Majesty, until the appointed hour has arrived to fill the world with the manifestations of his Presence, and the healing energy of his Spirit. Meanwhile *the night* still continues, although it is far spent, and the dawn is rapidly approaching. The church, therefore, as the representative of its absent Lord, receiving its illumination from Him by faith, through the power of the Spirit, yet rules this night, and in some faint measure instrumentally enlightens its darkness, as it faithfully reflects the light, and the image, and the glory, which it receives from Him, upon the world around.

But the material sun infinitely transcends in visible glory every other luminary of heaven, as it shines forth in its own inherent light, uniformly the same; whereas the moon reflects his borrowed light, and continually changes her aspect in her various phases; thus more plainly typifying the feeble, inconstant, and variable glory of the church, even when most faithful, and when most fully illuminated from above.

And this church consists of individuals. It is, therefore, the combination and multiplication of innumerable rays, which must constitute the brightness of the spiritual light in the world; and each individual

\* John viii. 12; ix. 5; xii. 35, 36, 46; and see i. 1—9, &c.; Eph. v. 8.

member of the mystical body of Christ has his own appointed part to play, or his own special vocation and ministry to fulfil. He cannot live to himself; he *must not be hid*; for he is an appointed witness of the love, of the holiness, and of the power of his God. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."\* But even without speaking a word, he ought to be discerned from afar, like the city set on a hill, directing the traveller to its gates, and cheering him by the fair prospect. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."† As a steward of the divine grace, he must minister to the welfare of others,‡ and earnestly labour to bring them to the knowledge of that Saviour, whose incomparable worth he has learnt to prize, in the light of his own countenance. Were he to hide his talent in a napkin, or to put his lamp under the bushel, self seeking, or self indulging, he would be condemned as a faithless and slothful servant.

But as the Lord connected a warning with the first symbol, he annexes an exhortation to the present one. It is impossible for us to mistake the real object of our calling, and of the exalted position, to which his grace has raised us. Let us consider it, not only in the urgent weight of its responsibilities, but in the constraining joy of its privileges. Are we not the children of a

\* Psalm lxvi. 16.

† 1 Cor. xii. 7.

‡ 1 Peter iv. 10; Rom. xii. 6—8.

heavenly king? Is not all that tends to the manifestation of his perfections, and to the extension of his kingdom, an enhancement of our bliss? What can be a more delightful employment to a child of God, or a more suitable object of holy strivings to a loyal subject, than the setting forth of His glory? It is our own by inheritance. "Whether (therefore) we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do it all to his glory,"\* and thus "put on Christ," or his image, in all things, that his love and the desire to please Him may be inseparably interwoven, by the hand of his own Spirit, as golden threads throughout every portion of our dress. For the Father, whom we serve, will honour all who honour his Son, and therefore follow Him;† and although we cannot fully enjoy this honour at present, a believing sense of his faithfulness and love will enable us to count all the afflictions, even of a protracted ministerial life of incessant toil in his service, and of oppressive suffering for his sake, light and momentary, in comparison with the glory to be revealed, and with the countless ages of that happy eternity, which He assures to all his children.

*Good works*, indeed, (publicly performed, but not with a view to publicity, or to attract notice to ourselves,‡) are here expressly required, as the whole tenor

\* 1 Cor. x. 31.

† 1 Sam. ii. 30; John xii. 26: for we can only honour the Father by honouring the Son. John v. 23.

‡ See on chapter vi. 1, &c.



of this discourse is strictly practical; and there is no other mode in which the Father can be glorified, or in which the reality of our discipleship can be completely attested.\* This indeed is the uniform testimony of the oracles of God. St. James, however, and St. Paul have been frequently opposed to each other, as if they inculcated contradictory doctrines; but this arises from want of deeper acquaintance with the inspired volume. The great apostle of the Gentiles is eminently practical, even when he discusses the deepest things of God, and declares the highest mysteries of our faith. None can insist more earnestly on the essential value of good works; but he first lays the foundation of his doctrine in the free grace of Christ. It is here, then, that we must also begin; for by nature we are "dead in trespasses and sins," and therefore without either the power or the inclination to do any thing really good. The word of faith must reach our hearts, and quicken us by the operation of the Holy Ghost, before we can have any savour of holiness, or any light of wisdom. But this places us, as it were, in a strong tower, beyond the reach of danger, in the arms of omnipotence, and on the bosom of eternal love. We no sooner flee to Jesus, without any merit or previous qualification, and earnestly grasp Him, than we find pardon and peace through the

\* John xv. 1—8. Conscience is not set at liberty that no works should be accomplished, but that confidence should be placed in none. They can be no more omitted than faith itself, nor are they less necessary. *Luther.* (Beausobre. *Hist. de la Ref.* ii. 176.)

efficacy of his atoning blood, and the imputation of his spotless righteousness, which thus become our only plea, and the only ground of our hopes. But if God "has begun a good work in us,"\* and assures us that He will carry it on triumphantly to the end, giving us the victory in all our conflicts, and manifesting his unfailing presence, so that we may rejoice in his free salvation "by grace through faith," we also know that "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before ordained that we should walk in them."† The "new creature" is manifested by a lively faith, invariably operating "by love," and by "keeping the commandments of God," as of a beloved Saviour;‡ and thus, as a tree of righteousness of the Lord's own planting, every believer is "filled with the fruits" of the Spirit, "in all righteousness, goodness, and truth," or enabled to exhibit "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance,"§ in his daily conduct.

The parable of the vine and of the branches strikingly illustrates this important subject. However luxuriant its foliage, the barren branch must be cut off; the empty professor must be condemned; but the fruitful branches will be pruned by the skilful husbandman,

\* Phil. i. 6.

† Eph. ii. 8—10. See Titus iii. 3—8.

‡ See 2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15; v. 6; 1 Cor. vii. 19, as mutually illustrating each other.

§ See Isaiah lxi. 3; Phil. i. 11; Eph. v. 9; Gal. v. 22, 23.

to render them more fruitful, even if less attractive in appearance; the believer, who abides in Christ, and thence draws grace and strength to serve God acceptably, will be repeatedly chastened, that he may bring forth more fruit "to his praise and glory."

It is because he "knows the joyful sounds" of liberty and peace in Christ, that the true disciple is filled with grateful love, and clings so earnestly to his Saviour, and labours in all things to please Him. His very confidence stirs him up to the greater diligence and anxiety to "make his calling and election sure." He received light and life and grace freely through the naked hand of simple faith; but *that* is not a mere assent to the truth, such as Simon Magus and the stony ground hearers yielded, but a full consent of the heart, a confident reliance upon the Lord, a spiritual vision of His glory, a living seed of a new nature, purifying, operative and divine. This faith, therefore, now mingles with all his works, and constrains him to live in holy obedience. Thus Abraham and Rahab, as the apostle says, were not justified by a mere speculative notion, but by an active operative principle, *or by works,\** as

\* James ii. 21; 24, 25. Chrysostom once said, "you cannot produce an instance of life in one who performed works of righteousness without faith; but I can point to a believer living and counted worthy of the kingdom without works. None has lived without faith, but the robber only believed and was justified." T. vi p. 739. But his faith was an operative one; for he rebuked his guilty comrade, and recognised his King, even in those circumstances of terror, and prayed to Him.

evidencing its existence. For *faith* without these is "dead, being alone:" that is, it has no real existence; it is a mere pretence, or an empty name; but in those instances it really "wrought with their works," and thus "by works was faith made perfect,"\* or shown and outwardly declared to be a living principle. It is obvious that the faith, which Abraham exhibited in that hour of mysterious trial, when he so meekly offered up his son, in unhesitating obedience, had not been previously defective or imperfect; and that his justification had not been delayed to that period; but it was *then* "found unto praise and honour and glory,"† or proved to be genuine; and thus the previous imputation of righteousness was sealed, and as it were publicly *justified*.‡

Faith therefore necessarily has the priority and pre-eminence, as it is the root from which every good work invariably springs;§ but then obedience is inseparably connected with it; and love, as the glorious abiding characteristic of the saints, is acknowledged by St. Paul to be greater in this respect than its present companions, faith and hope.||

\* James ii. 22. See the same expression in Heb. ii. 10; v. 9.

† 1 Peter i. 7.

‡ See Gen. xxii. 12, "*now I know*" cannot imply any previous ignorance or uncertainty in the divine mind; but only that the *reality* of the faith or obedience of Abraham was thus indisputably shown.

§ Howells compares faith to the mainspring of a watch. There is not a single wheel at work, but through its influence.

|| 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

But "good works" are the only evidence of faith, of which man can take cognizance, and which can prove to others the excellence of religion,\* and thus allure them to a Saviour. The notorious inconsistency of professing Christians was a fatal stumbling block to the heathen in the age of Chrysostom, as he repeatedly complains. "A good life, beloved, is a great thing." It won more disciples in the days of the apostles than their miracles; and if exhibited by the church at large, it would bear effectual testimony to Christ, and nothing more would be needed to convince the gainsayers than this practical logic.† Matthias is represented by ancient tradition testifying, but with hyperbolical vehemence, to a great truth. "If the neighbour of the elect sinned, the elect must first have transgressed, because if he had acted according to the rule of the divine word, his neighbour would have been awed by his conduct."‡ Herod indeed heard the Baptist gladly, and regarded him with unfeigned veneration, and did many right things at his suggestion; but his heart remained unchanged, and he eventually complied with the wishes of Herodias, and put his counsellor to death, rather than renounce his besetting sin, or incur the censure of his courtiers.§ An evil generation will ever find some

\* Works follow true knowledge, as shadows a body. Clemens A. Strom. viii. 13, 82.

† Neander Denkw. p. 158; 202; 207. Chrysost. T. viii. p. 367; 806. Such a life could not be led without divine grace.

‡ Clemens A. Strom. vii. 13, 82, p. 182. § Mark vi.

plea to encourage itself in its wayward course, and to excuse its continuance in sin, though the self denying exemplary Forerunner, or the spotless Son of God Himself, witness against it.\* At the same time "great searchings of heart" will become those, who exercise no salutary or restraining influence upon their neighbours, and observe that these continue altogether unabashed by their example, and unmoved by their teaching. May they not be hardening their hearts, and stifling the convictions of their consciences, by appealing to the observed inconsistencies of our walk? It is certain that the humble life of many a devoted loving pastor has done more good in his generation than all the eloquence and ability of a popular preacher. Men look narrowly to the character of their professed censors and instructors; and when they detect any real or apparent defect, they are very apt to turn from them with disgust, or to condemn them as hypocrites, whose denunciations and doctrines may justly be disregarded, as they are inoperative upon themselves. Paul, however, boldly appeals to his own example, as a rule and pattern to others, and exhorts ministers to walk the more circumspectly in all things, that the ministry be not blamed.† Our duty then is plain. Consistency and holiness will remove many prejudices; and "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," and, perhaps, really enable

\* Matt. xi. 16—19.

† See 2 Cor. i. 12; xi.; iv. 5—10; Phil. iii. 17; iv. 9; 1 Thess. ii.

us to win others to the cause of God. Let us therefore aim at this in the habitual temper of our minds, and in the constant tenor of our ways.\* For a Christian, who never wins a single soul, or induces another to adopt a virtuous and religious course, is really of little benefit; or, rather we may say, an unprofitable servant;† an untrimmed lamp, smoking noxiously, instead of shining upon all that are in the house, or that come within the range of its influence.

\* See 1 Peter ii. 15; iii. 1, 2; Phil. ii. 14—16.

† Chrysost. T. v. p. 222, 223. See Prov. xi. 30.

---

## CHAPTER III.

*The Abiding Authority of the Law, and of the  
Prophets.*

THE inculcation of practical holiness was the immediate object of the prophesyings of the Son of Man; and this is the central idea of the present discourse, of which we must never lose sight, if we would rightly apprehend his meaning in any doubtful particular. He had announced the kingdom of heaven, and the special characteristics of its happy subjects; but he had not defined the nature of that *righteousness*, for which they hunger and thirst, or for the sake of which they might be exposed to persecution. Was it not necessary to state the particulars in detail, by which its nature might be tested, or to refer to some recognised standard, to which conformity was required? Was it something higher and more exalted than Moses and the prophets had known? or was the term still employed in its familiar sense? The Scribes and Pharisees had erred both in practice and in theory; and therefore their unauthorised doctrine and unholy example must be equally condemned. But there were no new laws to be enacted, as those who listened to Jesus probably



anticipated, from the apparent novelty of his teaching. For Moses and the inspired messengers of heaven had already unfolded the divine will; and lest hypocrites, who felt themselves rebuked by the holy Saviour, should fix upon him the reproach of innovation, and the scandal of overruling authorities, so highly revered by the people; or lest these should misunderstand his meaning from want of adequate knowledge, and thus draw contrasts, where they should have seen harmony and unity of purpose, He here fully anticipates, and authoritatively silences, all such objectors, by his own explicit statements.

*"THINK NOT that I am come to destroy (or, to annul and repeal)\* the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.† For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.‡ Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall*

\* Beausobre.

† According to Tertullian adv. Marc. l. iv. c. 7, p. 199, and c. 9, p. 211, Marcion pretended that this was insidious: (ut additum erasit.) Irenæus asserts that he read the opposite. The importance of the testimony could not be overlooked by the heretics.

‡ Or "perish without attaining its end." Campbell (more accurately.)



*exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall IN NO CASE ENTER into the kingdom of heaven."*  
(*v.* 17—20.)

The distinct testimony of the Scriptures to the person and work of the Messiah, or to his sufferings and to the glory that should follow, was not now to be enforced. It was not until after his resurrection, that He graciously enlightened his disciples, and enabled them to understand the law and the prophets in this sense, or to trace the connexion between the types and the antetypes, or between the prophetic announcement and the historical fulfilment.\* The apostle John acknowledges with characteristic candour, that they had previously misunderstood, or overlooked this important point,† which is carefully illustrated throughout the Gospel of St. Matthew, by constant references to the fulfilled Scriptures, and which he similarly illustrates himself, the more clearly to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ of God.

At present, however, every thing personal is passed over in silence; and Emmanuel seems content to be regarded, as his miracles constrained Nicodemus, "*the* (renowned) teacher of Israel," to regard Him, as "*a* Teacher come from God."‡ Practical instruction was alone in question; and therefore, in the sequel, when

\* Luke xxiv. 44, 45.

† John ii. 19, 22; xii. 16; xx. 9.

‡ John iii. 2, 10. Observe the article in the Greek.

He laid down his golden rule, he emphatically adds, "for *this* is the law and the prophets," in illustration and confirmation of the statement before us. It is indeed but one link in a chain of connected moral teaching, eternally obligatory upon the children of men, and by the power of the Spirit written upon the hearts, and in a good measure exemplified in the lives, of the heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

The language here adopted by the Lord is comprehensive, according to the ordinary style of the Scriptures, inculcating a *general* truth, of which only a *specific view* is taken in the immediate context.\* It thus implies that the law and the prophets involve a complete system, framed by a Master mind, of which every particular however minute, or, to speak proverbially, every letter, and even every accentual mark, has its peculiar force, which can neither be impaired nor annulled. For they embody not only a perfect code of sublime morality, but an exact delineation of heavenly things in typical outline. Whatever was local and temporary ceased with the occasion of the enactment, having thus received its complete fulfilment; the "shadows of good things to come" were exhausted in Jesus, when he blotted out the curse of the law, and merited its recompense for his people, and thus authoritatively established a covenant of grace by his

\* Specialiter quædam pronuntiata, generaliter sapiunt. Tertull. de Spectac iii.

one finished work. It only remained that its moral precepts, thus brought out into bolder relief, as essentially unchangeable in their principles, should be enforced in all their breadth and spirituality by the Holy Spirit.\*

Coleridge supposed that the passing away of *heaven and earth*, implied the overthrow of the government, or of the superior hierarchy and of the subordinate people of Israel, and that the particular commandments, of which the Lord speaks, were those national institutions, which could only bind men as long as the state existed. But the language of St. Luke suggests the obvious interpretation of the proverbial expression, and excludes such a constrained and incongruous hypothesis. "It is *easier* for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to *fail*:"† in other words, it is all placed on the same inviolable footing; for although its fulfilment necessarily varies in extent and character according to its immediate object, no part of it can possibly fail. The Lord, indeed, has no direct reference to any ceremonial or national institution in the present discourse.‡

\* The law is not made void but established by faith. Rom. iii. 31. Tertullian de Monog. vii., recognises the distinction between the ritual and moral law.

† Luke xvi. 17. See the verse repeated without variation, Matt. xxiv. 35; Mark xiii. 31; Luke xxi. 33: "heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away;" i.e. they shall rather or sooner pass away than these.

‡ Tertull. adv. Marc. l. iv., c. 9, p. 210, 211, refers Matt. viii. 4 to Christ's desire to attest the truth of his own word in this place. (Verse 17.)

To introduce it would render the whole connexion obscure and unintelligible.

Again, Chrysostom says that the precepts in question (verse 19) are those subsequently announced; and that the declaration, "he shall be least in the kingdom of heaven," implies condemnation; since such inferiors cannot reign with the saints, but must be subject to their rule, in exclusion from its glories.\* He constantly represents the commandments of Jesus as an expansion of the law, through which men were to be exalted to a higher degree of excellence;† as if the Pharisees had fulfilled the former,‡ and thus proved faithful to the measure of light which they had received, under a preparatory dispensation; as Job, Noah, and Moses were perfect in respect to the standard of their age; whereas more is now required of those who would inherit the kingdom! But this seems to be a very inaccurate representation of the scope of this discourse. Wilful sin is avowed rebellion; and Jesus expressly charged the Scribes and Pharisees with hypocrisy and disobedience of the most flagrant character; so that their fancied righteousness was a mere delusion of infatuated sinners. Moreover the declaration of the beloved disciple

\* Chrysost. Op. T. vii. p. 157; Lat. Hom. ib. p. 808. Augustine held similar views; but Trench has rejected them. p. 191—194.

† Chrysost. T. v. p. 695. So Tertull. de Monog. vii., non tantum reservata, verum et *ampliata*.

‡ Chrysost. T. vii. p. 157, 158. So also T. iv. p. 400: but the contrary is admitted on Matt. xxiii. T. vii. p. 627.

recognises no higher standard than the law, because no other could possibly exist, for the Lord here expressly denies that he came to repeal it; and this the inculcation of another standard would virtually have done. But it is still written, "he that sinneth transgresseth also the law; for sin is (neither more nor less now than heretofore, but simply) the transgression of the law."\* In other words, it is the one grand unalterable *rule*, under which the Christian still lives;† for if he be not under it ‡ *in this sense*, there is no such thing as sin in Christians.

But as admission into the kingdom is necessarily a privilege, such admission is perfectly consistent with various degrees of glory, and of familiarity with the Father, or of distinctness of vision, or with varying capacities for enjoyment there. It accords with all our notions of benevolence and of righteousness to forgive, and even to honour, a zealous servant, though he may

\* 1 John iii. 4.

† See Rom. xiii. 8—10. Quidam interdum nihil sibi dicant esse cum lege, quam Christus non dissolvit, sed adimplevit: interdum quæ volunt legis arripiunt. Tertull. de Monog. vii.

‡ It has been said by theorists that he is not, and cannot be, under the law as a rule, because he is a sinner, and because if he has any thing to do with it, it puts him under condemnation! But its "yoke is easy" to the believer, as the yoke of his Redeemer. He "delights in it after the inner man;" for the Spirit has written it upon his heart; and its righteousness is fulfilled in all those who walk after the Spirit; for provision is made for their transgressions. Rom. vii. 22; Heb. viii. 10; x. 15—18; Rom. viii. 4; 1 John i. 8—10; ii. 1, 2; Rom. x. 4.

ignorantly transgress some injunctions laid upon him; but preference will unquestionably be shown to those who observe them all without distinction. The breaches, therefore, of the law in question cannot have been wilful, or presumptuous, or similar to those of the Scribes and Pharisees, which involved absolute exclusion; but they were deliberate; for the transgressor is supposed to teach others to do the same; so that they can only be imputed to ignorance, or to hasty misconception of the object of the Lord's coming, and of the permanence of the law, or of particular precepts in it, the moral bearing of which may be less evident. This was a misconception against which the previous statement was expressly designed to warn the disciples, and yet they might fall into it. But whatever may be the defects of a believer, whether he bring forth fruit a hundred fold, or only thirty fold, if his faith be genuine and heart-felt, he shall infallibly be saved; and we have already seen that the poor in spirit, and that those who suffer for righteousness' sake, are all without exception pronounced blessed by the Lord, because entitled to the privileges of the kingdom, "which He has promised to them that love Him," and of which he has already revealed to them the mysteries, in rich spiritual enjoyments of his Presence.

At a subsequent period, Jesus commanded his disciples to comply with the injunctions of the Scribes and Pharisees, because they sat with a certain authority

in the seat of Moses.\* *False* witnesses accused Stephen of asserting that Jesus would change the customs which he had delivered, and thus exasperated the people against him. But even the numerous converts under the presidency of James looked with suspicion upon Paul, under the erroneous impression, that he had prompted the Jews of the dispersion to abandon circumcision, and to renounce that law, for which they were all animated by the most fervent zeal.† The apostle had previously circumcised Timothy, and shorn his head at Cenchrea, on account of some voluntary vow! and he now felt no scruple to prove, by his compliance with the ceremonial law,‡ that he still regarded it, as *binding* upon his countrymen in Judea, where alone it could be strictly and literally observed. Nor let it be forgotten, that, when Israel is restored in the latter day, we may anticipate from the language of the prophets the restoration of sacrifices, and other ritual observances in the new temple;§ since the *natural* seed of Abraham is still interested in a covenant, only suspended for a season, *distinct* from the dispensation of the Gospel, or the spiritual covenant to his *spiritual*

\* Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.

† Acts xxi. 18—26. See Gal. ii. 11, 12. But Peter calls it “a yoke, which neither they nor their fathers could bear;” Acts xv. 10; and he seems to have disregarded its restrictions, when at Antioch. Gal. ii. 14.

‡ Acts xvi. 1—3; xviii. 18.

§ See Psalm li. 18, 19; cxviii. 26, 27, (with Matt. xxiii. 39;) Ezek. xx. 40—44; xl. &c.; Mal. iii. 1—4.



seed; so that not one jot or tittle of the law shall even then fail in reference to them.

But with this *we* have nothing to do, and to this, as already stated, the scope of the present discourse has no relation. When, indeed, falsely judaizing teachers sought to impose this yoke upon the Gentiles, Paul indignantly remonstrated. Those who had received the Spirit of adoption, through faith in the Gospel, must stand fast in their Christian liberty.\* If they were led by the Spirit, they were "not under the law, but under grace."† Circumcision, indeed, was immaterial in itself; nor if any man was called, being circumcised, might he justly become uncircumcised;‡ but to *them*, it would become a grievous sin, entailing the loss of all privilege, and an obligation to fulfil the whole law; for it would be to seek perfection in the flesh, or justification by rites and legal observances, after commencing in the Spirit. The law, *as a whole*, had been given as a school-master, or rather Pedagogue,§ to keep, superintend

\* Gal. iii.; iv.; v. 1—4.

† Gal. v. 18; Rom. vi. 14. The addition here shows the sense in which the first expression is employed. The imperfection of human language sometimes leads to strange mistakes, as the same phrases are written in different senses. Compare for instance Luke i. 74 with 1 Peter i. 17; Matt. viii. 12 with xiii. 38, &c.

‡ 1 Cor. vii. 17—20.

§ Gal. iii. 23—25. Conybeare strangely interprets this in the Attic sense, forgetting the more ordinary acceptation of the term, so fully illustrated by the works of Clement of Alexandria, who expressly applies the name Hortatory to the Word, when He calls men to

and regulate the conduct of those subject to it by practical lessons, and by the wholesome restraints of fear, until faith, or Christ the object of faith, should be revealed, in the fulness of time. 'Under it they were in bondage to the elements of the world, as a minor is under tutors and governors; but they had now been redeemed by the finished work of Jesus, in whom they were "accepted" and "complete" in all particulars. It would, therefore, be alike foolish and dangerous, and an act of gross inconsistency, to have recourse to any worldly elements, in the observance of times and seasons,\* as their false teachers desired.

salvation; that of Pedagogue, "when proceeding onward he assumes at once the healing and preceptive character," in a practical, not a doctrinal manner; and that of Teacher, when He is employed in the explication of doctrines. (See Bishop Kaye's work on Clement, p. 45.) Paul indeed uses the term in 1 Cor. iv. 15, to denote Christian teachers. Philo observes, that a youth would not venture to transgress in the presence of his Pedagogue, (see Plautus in Bacch) but his usefulness would be tested by the subsequent conduct of his charge, whose morals he was appointed to regulate: (de Mut. Nom. § 57. Cf. Chrysost. T. iv. p. 486; T. v. p. 215.) Chrysostom contrasts the Pædagogia or milk of the Old Testament, and the Philosophy, or solid food of the New. Id. p. 346.

\* Gal. iv. 10. Ye observe days and months and times and *years*. Coloss. ii. 16, 17. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath *days*: (rather the Sabbatical years) which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Cf. Heb. viii. 5; x. 1. But this can have no reference to the fourth commandment, or to the original institution of the Sabbath, as we shall presently see. The language of Isaiah i. 13, 14, intimates the displeasure with which

Being freed from the law as a covenant of works, and exempted from its ceremonial observances, the believer is "married to Christ that he may bring forth fruit unto God,"\* and "walk in love," bearing the burdens of his brethren in affectionate sympathy, and thus fulfilling the law of Christ, which is in effect the law of God.†

But it is obvious that these truths cannot possibly affect *the rule*, which at once defines and illustrates the nature and operations of genuine charity, and marks out the course in which Christians delight to walk, and which the Lord himself here proceeds to enforce, in accordance with Moses and the prophets, not as a means of justification, but as his own will, for the perpetual guidance of His disciples. For, thus, in like manner, whether we need warning admonitions‡ and reproof,§ or direct instruction,|| or holy consolation,¶ or a clearer

Jehovah must ever regard formal service, even when his own ordinances are thus hypocritically perverted. But the institution of the Sabbath is subsequently enforced by the prophet with peculiar emphasis.

\* Rom. vii. 4.

† Eph. v. 1; Gal. vi. 2.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 11. Cf. Heb. iii. and iv.; Jude 5, 11.

§ 2 Tim. iii. 16. See Luke xvi. 31.

|| Say I these things as a man? or saith not *the law* the same also? 1 Cor. ix. 8. He comments on Deut. xxv. 4, enforcing its *rule* in plainer terms, verses 9—15. The quotation recurs in 1 Tim. v. 18. At Antioch, in like manner, Paul quoted Isaiah xlix. 6, as inclusive of a *command* to them to preach to the Gentiles. Acts xiii. 46, 47. See farther, Gal. iv. 21—31.

¶ Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our

view of the divine sovereignty,\* and of the eternal purposes of Jehovah,† the great apostle of the Gentiles invariably directs us to the law, and to the prophets. Sometimes, moreover, by a double reference, as it were to two successive portions of divine revelation, he seems designedly to effect the clearer establishment of his doctrine, out of the mouth of two (previously acknowledged) witnesses.‡ Who then can fail to recognise their abiding authority and inviolable sanctity?§

There is, however, one commandment, in relation to which lax opinions have been very widely diffused, and

learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Rom. xv. 4. (See Psalm lxix. 9 there quoted.) Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Heb. xiii. 5. (Referring to Josh. i. 5; as quoted by Philo de Confus Ling § 82, who calls it the oracle of the gracious God.)

\* Rom. xi. 1—5, (commenting on 1 Kings xix. 10, 18;) ix. 29, (Isaiah i. 9;) compare the historical allusions of the Lord, Luke iv. 24—27, to the distinguishing grace exhibited to the Syrian Naaman, and to the woman of Sarepta, belonging to idolatrous Sidon, the country of Jezebel.

† Rom. ix. and xi.

‡ Thus to enforce the prohibition of revenge, he refers first to Moses (Deut. xxxii. 35,) and secondly to Solomon, (Prov. xxv. 21, 22;) and to exhibit the divine purpose relative to the fall of Israel and the call of the Gentiles, he again cites Moses (Deut. xxxii. 21,) and Isaiah (lxv. 1, 2.) See Rom. xii. 19—21; x. 19—21.

§ Addressing children, and exhorting them to obey their parents, Paul again refers to "the first commandment with promise," distinctly recognising the unchanged authority of the moral rule of the law. Eph. vi. 2, 3. (Exod. xx. 12.)

advocated, even by a Luther, on which it seems necessary to dwell a little more in detail. Is the law of the Sabbath typical or moral? Jewish or Christian? part of a repealed law, with which a regenerate man has nothing to do, or one, universally obligatory, until heaven and earth shall pass away? If *merely* typical, it must have already received its fulfilment in Christ, and his church;\* if not, the language before us, proves that it must still be obligatory upon us. But must we not cordially sympathise with the language of Milton, with reference to a day, which not the divine law alone, but "even our reason hath consecrated, that we might have one day at least of seven set apart, wherein to examine and increase our knowledge of God, to meditate and commune of our faith, our hope, our eternal city in heaven, and to quicken withal the study and exercise of charity."†

Chrysostom,‡ indeed, thought that the Lord purposed to annul it, and that he showed his authority by breaking

\* The apostle teaches us to look for its future fulfilment at the second advent of Christ. Heb. iv. 9. But Augustine represented Christians as not observing the Sabbath, "which was only such in a figure," because "the true Sabbaths, those to which the others pointed were come; seeing that He was come, in whom there is the true rest and sabbath keeping for men's spirits, He, who could say, *come unto me, &c.*" Trench p. 191.

† Works vol. i. p. 40. Ed. 1806.

‡ T. vii. p. 374; 154; 388; 376. A reference occurs to the siege of Jericho, p. 375; which is also alleged by Tertullian; adv. Marc. l. iv. c. 12.

it, although he never legislated directly on the subject, and offered various apologies for his conduct, lest he should too rudely shock the prejudices of the people. But we can neither reconcile such a purpose with the present declaration of Christ, nor admit that the law was really violated on any of the occasions referred to; for if Jesus had violated it, he would have become a transgressor, as a Jew according to the flesh, and thus have defeated the great end of his advent.\* It is not the mere letter, which other Scriptures modify, but the spirit of the precept, which must be regarded; and the apparent breaches of the Sabbath are all covered (as Tertullian† perceived,) by the obligations of piety and charity, or the plea of necessity, which leave the grand principle unaffected. Hosea‡ declares that Jehovah prefers mercy to sacrifice; and although the Pharisees were always lying in wait to entrap Jesus, and even sought to kill him, on the ground of his supposed violation of the Sabbath, they were unable to maintain the charge, or seriously to answer his challenge, “which of you convinceth me of sin?”§

In explanation of the severe judgment inflicted upon

\* Contrast his language when baptised by John. Matt. iii. 15.

† Adv. Marc. l. iv. c. 12. *Adimplevit enim et hic legem, dum conditionem interpretatur ejus &c.* p. 227, 228.

‡ Hosea vi. 6.

§ See John v. 10; 16—18; vii. 19—24; viii. 46; ix. 6. On this Chrysostom says, *ποῖς δὲ τὰυτα οὐ παραβαίνων*, and as some add, *ἀλλ' ὑπερβαίνων*. T. viii. p. 188.

advocated, even by a Luther, on which it seems necessary to dwell a little more in detail. Is the law of the Sabbath typical or moral? Jewish or Christian? part of a repealed law, with which a regenerate man has nothing to do, or one, universally obligatory, until heaven and earth shall pass away? If *merely* typical, it must have already received its fulfilment in Christ, and his church;\* if not, the language before us, proves that it must still be obligatory upon us. But must we not cordially sympathise with the language of Milton, with reference to a day, which not the divine law alone, but "even our reason hath consecrated, that we might have one day at least of seven set apart, wherein to examine and increase our knowledge of God, to meditate and commune of our faith, our hope, our eternal city in heaven, and to quicken withal the study and exercise of charity."†

Chrysostom,‡ indeed, thought that the Lord purposed to annul it, and that he showed his authority by breaking

\* The apostle teaches us to look for its future fulfilment at the second advent of Christ. Heb. iv. 9. But Augustine represented Christians as not observing the Sabbath, "which was only such in a figure," because "the true Sabbaths, those to which the others pointed were come; seeing that He was come, in whom there is the true rest and sabbath keeping for men's spirits, He, who could say, *come unto me, &c.*" Trench p. 191.

† Works vol. i. p. 40. Ed. 1806.

‡ T. vii. p. 374; 154; 388; 376. A reference occurs to the siege of Jericho, p. 375; which is also alleged by Tertullian; adv. Marc. l. iv. c. 12.

it, although he never legislated directly on the subject, and offered various apologies for his conduct, lest he should too rudely shock the prejudices of the people. But we can neither reconcile such a purpose with the present declaration of Christ, nor admit that the law was really violated on any of the occasions referred to; for if Jesus had violated it, he would have become a transgressor, as a Jew according to the flesh, and thus have defeated the great end of his advent.\* It is not the mere letter, which other Scriptures modify, but the spirit of the precept, which must be regarded; and the apparent breaches of the Sabbath are all covered (as Tertullian† perceived,) by the obligations of piety and charity, or the plea of necessity, which leave the grand principle unaffected. Hosea‡ declares that Jehovah prefers mercy to sacrifice; and although the Pharisees were always lying in wait to entrap Jesus, and even sought to kill him, on the ground of his supposed violation of the Sabbath, they were unable to maintain the charge, or seriously to answer his challenge, “which of you convinceth me of sin?”§

In explanation of the severe judgment inflicted upon

\* Contrast his language when baptised by John. Matt. iii. 15.

† Adv. Marc. l. iv. c. 12. Adimplevit enim et hic legem, dum conditionem interpretatur ejus &c. p. 227, 228.

‡ Hosea vi. 6.

§ See John v. 10; 16—18; vii. 19—24; viii. 46; ix. 6. On this Chrysostom says, *ποῖς δὲ τὰυτα οὐ παραβαίνων*, and as some add, *ἀλλ' ὑπερβαίνων*. T. viii. p. 188.



advocated, even by a Luther, on which it seems necessary to dwell a little more in detail. Is the law of the Sabbath typical or moral? Jewish or Christian? part of a repealed law, with which a regenerate man has nothing to do, or one, universally obligatory, until heaven and earth shall pass away? If *merely* typical, it must have already received its fulfilment in Christ, and his church;\* if not, the language before us, proves that it must still be obligatory upon us. But must we not cordially sympathise with the language of Milton, with reference to a day, which not the divine law alone, but "even our reason hath consecrated, that we might have one day at least of seven set apart, wherein to examine and increase our knowledge of God, to meditate and commune of our faith, our hope, our eternal city in heaven, and to quicken withal the study and exercise of charity."†

Chrysostom,‡ indeed, thought that the Lord purposed to annul it, and that he showed his authority by breaking

\* The apostle teaches us to look for its future fulfilment at the second advent of Christ. Heb. iv. 9. But Augustine represented Christians as not observing the Sabbath, "which was only such in a figure," because "the true Sabbaths, those to which the others pointed were come; seeing that He was come, in whom there is the true rest and sabbath keeping for men's spirits, He, who could say, *come unto me, &c.*" Trench p. 191.

† Works vol. i. p. 40. Ed. 1806.

‡ T. vii. p. 374; 154; 388; 376. A reference occurs to the siege of Jericho, p. 375; which is also alleged by Tertullian; adv. Marc. l. iv. c. 12.

it, although he never legislated directly on the subject, and offered various apologies for his conduct, lest he should too rudely shock the prejudices of the people. But we can neither reconcile such a purpose with the present declaration of Christ, nor admit that the law was really violated on any of the occasions referred to; for if Jesus had violated it, he would have become a transgressor, as a Jew according to the flesh, and thus have defeated the great end of his advent.\* It is not the mere letter, which other Scriptures modify, but the spirit of the precept, which must be regarded; and the apparent breaches of the Sabbath are all covered (as Tertullian† perceived,) by the obligations of piety and charity, or the plea of necessity, which leave the grand principle unaffected. Hosea‡ declares that Jehovah prefers mercy to sacrifice; and although the Pharisees were always lying in wait to entrap Jesus, and even sought to kill him, on the ground of his supposed violation of the Sabbath, they were unable to maintain the charge, or seriously to answer his challenge, “which of you convinceth me of sin?”§

In explanation of the severe judgment inflicted upon

\* Contrast his language when baptised by John. Matt. iii. 15.

† Adv. Marc. l. iv. c. 12. *Adimplevit enim et hic legem, dum conditionem interpretatur ejus &c.* p. 227, 228.

‡ Hosea vi. 6.

§ See John v. 10; 16—18; vii. 19—24; viii. 46; ix. 6. On this Chrysostom says, *ποιοῖσι δὲ τὰυτα οὐ παραβαίνων*, and as some add, *ἀλλ’ ὑπερβαίνων*. T. viii. p. 188.

advocated, even by a Luther, on which it seems necessary to dwell a little more in detail. Is the law of the Sabbath typical or moral? Jewish or Christian? part of a repealed law, with which a regenerate man has nothing to do, or one, universally obligatory, until heaven and earth shall pass away? If *merely* typical, it must have already received its fulfilment in Christ, and his church;\* if not, the language before us, proves that it must still be obligatory upon us. But must we not cordially sympathise with the language of Milton, with reference to a day, which not the divine law alone, but "even our reason hath consecrated, that we might have one day at least of seven set apart, wherein to examine and increase our knowledge of God, to meditate and commune of our faith, our hope, our eternal city in heaven, and to quicken withal the study and exercise of charity."†

Chrysostom,‡ indeed, thought that the Lord purposed to annul it, and that he showed his authority by breaking

\* The apostle teaches us to look for its future fulfilment at the second advent of Christ. Heb. iv. 9. But Augustine represented Christians as not observing the Sabbath, "which was only such in a figure," because "the true Sabbaths, those to which the others pointed were come; seeing that He was come, in whom there is the true rest and sabbath keeping for men's spirits, He, who could say, *come unto me, &c.*" Trench p. 191.

† Works vol. i. p. 40. Ed. 1806.

‡ T. vii. p. 374; 154; 388; 376. A reference occurs to the siege of Jericho, p. 375; which is also alleged by Tertullian; adv. Marc. l. iv. c. 12.

it, although he never legislated directly on the subject, and offered various apologies for his conduct, lest he should too rudely shock the prejudices of the people. But we can neither reconcile such a purpose with the present declaration of Christ, nor admit that the law was really violated on any of the occasions referred to; for if Jesus had violated it, he would have become a transgressor, as a Jew according to the flesh, and thus have defeated the great end of his advent.\* It is not the mere letter, which other Scriptures modify, but the spirit of the precept, which must be regarded; and the apparent breaches of the Sabbath are all covered (as Tertullian† perceived,) by the obligations of piety and charity, or the plea of necessity, which leave the grand principle unaffected. Hosea‡ declares that Jehovah prefers mercy to sacrifice; and although the Pharisees were always lying in wait to entrap Jesus, and even sought to kill him, on the ground of his supposed violation of the Sabbath, they were unable to maintain the charge, or seriously to answer his challenge, “which of you convinceth me of sin?”§

In explanation of the severe judgment inflicted upon

\* Contrast his language when baptised by John. Matt. iii. 15.

† Adv. Marc. l. iv. c. 12. Adimplevit enim et hic legem, dum conditionem interpretatur ejus &c. p. 227, 228.

‡ Hosea vi. 6.

§ See John v. 10; 16—18; vii. 19—24; viii. 46; ix. 6. On this Chrysostom says, ποιοῖς δὲ τὰυτα ὅν παραβάειν, and as some add, ἀλλ’ ὑπερβαίνων. T. viii. p. 188.

the Israelite in the wilderness for gathering sticks on the day of rest,\* Chrysostom observes that the Sabbath was originally a most beneficial institution. For "it not only tended to render men benevolent and kind to their servants, but was also a perpetual memorial of the creation and of the providence of God, and at the same time, by gradually withdrawing them from every wicked practice, prepared them to attend to higher spiritual lessons." But now, as he adds, Christ has raised us beyond this, "bidding us observe a life-long feast, not any special one; and if we do this by abstaining from evil, and have the Lord of all dwelling within us, and our citizenship in heaven, what need have we of the Sabbath?"†

But, in the first place, the case referred to seems rather to be recorded as a solemn warning against presumptuous sin, or against wilful contempt of the word of the Lord, whatever that word may be; and, in the second place, the opinions of the Rhetorician involve no argument, and are utterly irreconcilable with the beautiful language of the Evangelical prophet, who speaks indeed of *spiritual fasts*, but ever enforces a

\* Numb. xv. 30—36.

† T. vii. p. 377. He refers to Ezek. xx. Philo calls the law of the virgin Sabbath, most holy and awful. The day should be devoted to the study of philosophy, amendment of life, and more diligent attention to the reproofs of conscience. de Mund. Opif. § 43. He adheres to the strict rule, which prohibits the lighting of a fire. Vit. Moys. l. iii. § 28; de Septen. § 7.

*literal Sabbath.* "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt *honour Him*, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."\* It was not thus that the Pharisees honoured God. Their cold praise and repulsive austerities were not the service of love; they knew nothing of the delight, which the Sabbath affords to a spiritual mind, and with which its return is welcomed by the Christian labourer. But rest from pleasure and from business of a secular character is here equally prescribed; and delight in the day is recompensed by its natural result, delight in the Lord Himself. Nor is the Jew alone concerned. "The sons of the stranger (also), that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant, even them will I bring to my holy mountain; and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."† As the promises of the prophet must

\* Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.

† Id. lvi. 6, 7.

belong to the Gospel dispensation, it cannot be supposed that he would specify a ceremonial and typical ordinance, which it was to abolish, as the distinguishing test of adherence to the covenant of God. But long experience\* has fully proved, that to despise the Sabbath is to "forsake our own mercies;" for religion in the soul of man is like a tender exotic, which must be vigilantly cherished, in the conscientious observance of all the aids thus afforded to the cultivation of piety, if we would not see it languish and expire, and the heart wander farther and farther from God.

On referring to the law, the position of the fourth commandment, "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,"† will at once arrest attention, and prove its moral and unalterable character. It stands as a connecting link between the two tables, as the wisely and graciously

\* It was thus that the Author first learnt its value, and the true application of Mark ii. 28, from the sad results of Sabbath breaking, through ignorance and negligence, when on the Continent.

† Amongst the works of the celebrated Jonathan Edwards are three sermons, in which he very earnestly and elaborately enforces these two propositions; first, that it is the mind of God, that one day of the week should be devoted to rest and to religious exercises, throughout all ages and nations; and secondly, that it is the will of God, that under the Gospel dispensation, or in the Christian church, this day should be the first day of the week. Without expressing unqualified assent to all the arguments of these discourses, we may venture to recommend them to the attentive consideration of all who are anxious to ascertain the truth. On 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. Works vol. ii. p. 93—103. See on the second point, John xx. 19; 26; Acts xx. 6, 7; Rev. i. 10.

appointed means of maintaining a public recognition of the true God, and of cherishing piety in individuals, and likewise of promoting love and benevolence to our fellow men. For as "the first commandment fixes the object, the second the means, the third the manner," the fourth specifies "the time of worship;" as it is obvious that, "one proportion of time is better and fitter than another for the purpose;"\* and it accords with the wisdom and love of a gracious Creator to legislate on a point, on which human reason might be incompetent to pronounce, or on which human caprice would have suggested a variety of arbitrary, inconsistent, and conflicting opinions, rendering union impossible, and defeating the benevolent design, which has dictated an institution, "founded in the universal state and nature of mankind," alike everywhere and eternally essential. And now, how blessed are those occasions, if only in their humanising influences, when rich and poor can meet together, neither too frequently nor too rarely, in the spiritual worship of a common Saviour, and realise their common origin and their common hopes!

The language of the Lord in the Gospel of St. Mark carries us back to the original institution. "The Sabbath was made for (the) man, and not (the) man for the Sabbath; *therefore* the Son of man is Lord also of the

\* Jonathan Edwards. The first three commands are in some sense comprehended in John iv. 24. They who worship God, and none other may be worshipped, must worship him in spirit, without an image, &c., and in truth, in earnest sincerity, not "in vain."



Sabbath.”\* Moses tells us that “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work;”† and Sabbath in the Hebrew signifies *rest*. It was thus “instituted in the time of man’s innocence,” as even then essential to secure his continuance in holy love. For pure intellect might have lost itself in cold abstractions, in loftiest meditations upon the wonderful works of God, or in contemplation of His glorious attributes, if He had not reserved to it seasons of rest and relaxation, when the affections might have full play, and revel with delight in more direct visions of the Creator Himself, and in immediate communion with His loving Spirit. But Adam, as our federal head, the first man, was Lord of all below, and therefore also the privileged owner and Lord of the Sabbath, until he lost or forfeited all by his disobedience; and that holy day was despoiled of its privileges, and he of its enjoyment. Probably his posterity in general lost all trace of the institution in the bonds of cherished ungodliness.‡ Ezekiel asserts

\* Mark ii. 27, 28.

† Gen. ii. 3.

‡ Bishop Kaye observes that Clement of Alexandria quotes a passage from Plato, in which he discovers an allusion to the Lord’s day, under the name of *the eighth* day, and then proceeds to produce other quotations from Greek writers to show that they considered *the seventh* day holy. “All that can be fairly collected from these passages is, that the Greeks attached some peculiar sanctity to the seventh day of the month, and some peculiar virtue to the number seven; but this they did also to other days and numbers.” (Account

that God *gave* it to Israel as a sign and a memorial, to remind them, that He was the Lord that sanctified them;\* and therefore Nehemiah distinctly refers to this communication as a special act of divine grace.† We cannot suppose that privileges will be withheld under the Gospel, though we see that the Jew could not realise those so graciously “made known” to him, as long as he formally and superstitiously rested in the mere letter of the law.

But the second Adam has come “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” and by his spotless obedience merited, and therefore regained, all that the first forfeited by his sin; and it is as the Son of man, (*not* as God,) that in the passage before us Jesus *consequently* claims authority over the day, instituted for the benefit of *man*; though this important connexion has been commonly overlooked. Jesus indeed was already by divine appointment Lord of all below; and when by His resurrection he proved the completeness of his glorious work, and the reality of his triumph, he restored a forfeited inheritance to his church, and therefore also the Sabbath, which of old he had provisionally made known to Israel alone. We, therefore, regard it, as now *given*, as a perpetual ordinance to all his people, throughout the

of the Writings, &c., of Clement, p. 418.) The Lord's day was constantly regarded as *the eighth*; (Tertull. de Idolat. xiv. octavus quisque dies, &c.,) and this led to much mystical speculation in the church.

\* Ezek. xx. 12, 20.

† Neh. ix. 14.

world, and in every successive generation, as His own day, *because man's day*; but "blessed and sanctified" anew, by His own rest in glory, by His manifested presence, peace, and Spirit, as a day of unspeakable blessedness to body, soul, and spirit; to be observed not with Pharisaical preciseness, but with the joyful confidence of emancipated and loving children.

The law is not repealed, but enforced by these considerations with peculiar solemnity; for its repeal would involve a penalty; as it is a law of love, not of terror; of privilege, not of restraint; and though the world may still find it a weariness, and profane it by its amusements and business, this only testifies to its own blindness, and seals its condemnation;\* and the voice of friendly admonition will still whisper in its ears, "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," for it was instituted for your benefit, and restored to you by the death and resurrection of a loving Mediator.

It is, therefore, now necessarily observed on the day, which witnessed His triumph, and sealed that restoration. But it has thus become a more expressive type of that *Sabbatism*, as the apostle calls it, "which remains for the people of God,"† in the great Day of the Lord, when "the Regeneration" shall be consummated; as

\* Heb. x. 28, 29, would lead us to regard the violation of a Christian institution as more fearful in its consequences than the mere breach of a Mosaic law. The Sabbath is fenced by double sanctions.

† Heb. iv. 9.

even now it constantly affords many precious earnestnesses of that rest in glory to the waiting saint.

Nor let it be forgotten, that, when the original precept was *repeated* in the book of Deuteronomy,\* a new reason was connected with it as a ground of its observance; even that redemption of Israel out of the servitude of Egypt, which is the most striking figure of the redemption of the church from the bondage of sin; which was accomplished, when Jesus burst the bonds of death, and rose in triumph from the tomb. This repetition, therefore, seems strikingly indicative of the altered motives, upon which unaltered laws may be enforced in different ages, and of the unchanged character of an obligation to observe an institution of which the form is changed.

But to revert to the language of Jesus more immediately before us, (ver. 18,) it is evident that the inviolability of the Scriptures renders it more imperatively necessary for us to *search*† them with the greater diligence. The precepts which they contain are all calculated to enlighten us, and to direct us in “paths of pleasantness and peace,” and to render us “thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Amidst the many grievous failings and blunders of the Fathers, it is delightful to find them uniformly attesting the excellency and supremacy of the divine

\* Deut. v. 15.

† John v. 39. Chrysostom understands the words as *imperative*, or preceptive.

word, and exhorting all men to study it with diligence, as our only infallible guide.\* The miner will not neglect the smallest vein of precious metal; neither may we pass over one jot or one tittle of the Scriptures. Nothing is trivial or superfluous, which is spoken by the Holy Ghost; we should therefore investigate that which seems to be so with the greater care.†

It has been said that not a word in the finer parts of Demosthenes and of Milton can be changed without in some degree marring their force and beauty. Surely, then, it cannot be safe or prudent in us to overlook a single letter of Holy Writ, pronounced by its Divine Author to be so sacred, or to neglect the strict meaning of words set down by writers, so much wiser and more careful, under the superintendence of an unerring Spirit. It is a maxim of philosophers, well calculated to stimulate them to nice and accurate observation, that nature most clearly discloses itself in the least particulars. It has even been affirmed that the fall of an apple elicited the train of thought, which led a Newton to the discovery of the laws of gravity. Be that as it may, some short or neglected Scriptures, which we may have perused a thousand times without due attention, may ultimately be recognised as a most important link

\* See the quotation from Augustine in Roger Bacon in the 13th century. "Ego solis iis libris qui canonici appellantur hunc honorem ferre didici ut nullum horum scriptorum errasse firmissime credam."

• Compare also Chrysost. Hom. in Gen. xi. T. ii. p. 108.

† See Chrysost. T. i. p. 3; and T. viii. p. 181, (on John iv. 54.)

in the chain of proof, by which a great truth is firmly established, or some master illusion permanently dispelled.

But as Chrysostom said with special reference to the words of St. Paul, "there is an inexhaustible mine in every part of the book of God." Centuries have elapsed, and many writers and many teachers and interpreters have drawn much from it, and that continuously; but they have not exhausted the rich deposit. For it is not the object of sense, and therefore it is not destroyed by the number of those who dig, but increases and abounds the more! And as spiritual things cannot be expended, they may be understood more clearly in successive ages, as more prayerful and enlarged intellects are engaged in the work of investigation. Nor can any, who have not set about this work in earnest, have any adequate idea of the marvellous fulness of the Scriptures.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

*The necessity of attaining to a more perfect righteousness than that of the Scribes and Pharisees; and an explanation of its leading Characteristics.*

NOT only will loss of privilege result from the violation of one of the least commandments of the law, but also from neglect of that habitual earnestness, which is implied by hungering and thirsting after righteousness. A Jewish proverb has been cited, in which it is asserted that if only two were admitted into heaven, the one would be a Pharisee, and the other a Scribe; and it is probably true, that many of these men, like Saul of Tarsus, were strictly conscientious, and really zealous for God; but whatever might be their pretensions, or their credit with an ignorant and undiscerning multitude, they had no qualifications really acceptable in the sight of God. The Lord, therefore, (as already intimated,) here warns his disciples against any false estimate of their character, lest they should be led to acquiesce in their standard, and to imitate their example.

*“For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”*  
(v. 20.)

Their ordinary doctrine and practice seem to have been essentially defective in four points; and first, in an inadequate view of the character, and of the requirements, of the law, which caused them to acquiesce in their own imperfect obedience, as if it were sufficient unto justification and life; and this view was in a great measure dependent upon the traditions and glosses, by which they too habitually obscured the holiness of the divine commandments. St. Paul appears to acknowledge this in his memorable declaration in the epistle to the Romans. “I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died; and the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.”\* He had neither seen its extent, nor felt its power; but the words, “thou shalt not covet,”† seemingly aroused his conscience, and brought him to a sense of sin.

But, in the second place, the Pharisees performed those religious duties, on which they most relied in their ignorant attempt to establish their own righteousness,‡ in a false and ostentatious spirit; or, as the Lord himself expressly asserts, they invariably acted with

\* Rom. vii. 9, 10.

† Id. 7.

‡ Rom. x. 3.



exclusive regard to their fellow men,\* as if their applause, and the transitory honour, thus acquired, were sufficient to satisfy their grovelling minds.

For their religious profession was really disgraced, in the third place, by an intense worldliness, and by the vain attempt to combine the service of two masters; so that their devotion was often a mere cloak of insatiable covetousness.†

And yet farther, as if the better to screen themselves, and to maintain the appearance of superior sanctity, they indulged in censorious judgments, and frequently in hypocritical rebukes of their fellows;‡ “trusting in themselves that they were righteous, and despising others.”

Now it appears, that, in the combination of these points, unquestionably characteristic of the Scribes and Pharisees, we have the true key to the connection in the discourse before us, and the central idea, round which the various precepts of the Lord naturally group themselves in admirable order.

For true righteousness must be conformity to the mind or will of God, as that is made known to us in His law, as altogether holy, just, and good.§ The Psalmist clearly perceived its breadth|| and spirituality, and therefore had a deep sense of his shortcomings,¶ and earnestly appealed to the mercy of God, as his only

\* Matt. xxiii. 5.

† Luke xviii. 9—14.

|| Psalm cxix. 96.

† Luke xvi. 13—15.

§ Rom. vii. 12.

¶ Psalm cxiii. 2, &c.

refuge and portion. For the law really demands the surrender of the whole man to a Heavenly Father in heartfelt love, and a careful observance of His ways,\* or a wary walk in the narrow paths of strict obedience,† and the most earnest heed to the words of our lips.‡ When the Scribe openly avowed his conviction, grounded upon the Scriptures before him,§ that there is but one God, and that to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices,|| “he answered discreetly;” and the Lord declared that he was “*not far* from the kingdom of God.”¶ What he needed was not a higher standard, but a right application of the one before him to his own soul, and such a sense of his own transgressions, as must have constrained him to renounce all self-dependence, and self-righteousness, and to seek for pardon in the appointed way.

1. Our Lord, therefore, here proceeds, in the first place, to clear the law from false glosses, and to teach its spiritual meaning in various points, in which it had been grossly abused. For, as Leighton well observes,

\* Prov. xxiii. 26.

† Prov. iv. 25—27.

‡ Psalm xxxix. 1.

§ Deut. vi. 4, 5; x. 12, 13; Levit. xix. 18.

|| 1 Sam. xv. 22; Psalm li. 16; Isaiah i. 11—17, &c. It does not appear that any undue stress was laid upon sacrifices by the Pharisees: they were too costly.

¶ Mark xii. 32—34.

“men aiming at self righteousness by the law, and desirous of it as cheap as might be, with the least pains, not being willing or able to rise to its perfection, drew it down and shaped it to their imperfection, and cut it down to the measure of external obedience, and that of the easiest size.” The ordinary standard of the Pharisee is indeed summarily expressed in the Gospel of St. Luke.\* The proud man entered the holy temple professedly to pray; but he could only contemplate himself. “God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or *even* as this Publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.”

These certainly were no extraordinary attainments; and yet so entirely had the genius of Christianity been obscured in the Oriental church at the latter part of the fourth century, that the renowned and canonized Chrysostom positively asserted, that this Pharisee had lived righteously, and that he only lost the fruit of his exertions, and the reward of his merit, and thus eventually perished, because he railed at the Publican, or because he was puffed up by his good deeds, and therefore after having weathered many storms made shipwreck of his soul, richly freighted as it was, at the very mouth of the harbour.†

But mere freedom from gross vices, and external

\* Luke xviii. 9—14.

† Opp. T. i. p. 53; T. iii. p. 308; 575; 871; T. v. p. 263; 309; 384; 743; T. vii. p. 349; 569; 571.

observances, can avail little in the sight of a heart-searching God. The holy standard, here set before us in detail, (vers. 21—48,) will suffice at once to reprove, and to direct us, as it equally binds the tongue and the heart, the eye and the hand.

---

# PART I. § 1.

*“Ye have heard that it was said TO THE ANCIENTS,\* Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause,† shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, RACA, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, MOREH,‡ shall be in danger of hell fire.*

*“Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against*

\* Campbell.

† Campbell; and Chrysost. T. iii. p. 25, explain *ἰσὺν* by *ἀδικῶς*: “unjustly.” Augustine says that the word was omitted in the Greek MSS which he consulted, as it is in the Vatican MS; but it appears in the greatest number of existing copies, and in most of the early versions, as it is invariably recognised by Chrysostom.

‡ Campbell.

*thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

*"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."* (v. 21—26.)

It will be observed, that almost all the precepts unfolded in this first division of the Lord's discourse, have respect to the second table of the law, and are designed to enforce that brotherly love, or more comprehensive charity,\* which is the surest test of the reality of a religious profession, and of the value of spiritual knowledge.† In like manner, when the rich youth inquired the way to eternal life, and asked *which* commandments it was essential for him to observe with that recompense in view, the Lord referred, (in the first place,) exclusively to those, which regulate our conduct towards our fellow men.‡ The apostle follows the same course, when he tells the Romans, that love is the fulfilment of the law.§ If we fail here, we fail altogether; but when the love of God is shed abroad

\* See 2 Peter i. 7.

† 1 John iii. 10; 17; 23; iv. 7, 8, 11, 20, 21; v. 1, 2; 1 Cor. xiii. &c.

‡ Matt. xix. 16—19, &c.

§ Rom. xiii. 8—10.

in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, through faith, this necessarily constrains us to love one another;\* and such love is the unfailing manifestation of a justifying and sanctifying faith, proving our acceptance and perfection in Christ.

But it has been supposed, that our Lord here quotes directly from the law of Moses, as delivered to Israel of old, and that by virtue of his own divine authority, he now expands or unfolds the original precepts, and, as already intimated, lays down stricter rules for the guidance of his disciples, or a more exalted law of love. This, however, seems to be no less inconsistent with His Prophetic office, and His own explicit declarations, already specified, and with the language of St. Paul,† than the grosser error which imputes to Him an intention to repeal the Mosaic precept. Campbell directed attention to the mode in which He speaks. It is not, “it was said,” but, “ye have heard that it was said;” so that He cannot be alleging the words of Jehovah, but merely what their ordinary teachers had told them.‡ For although such language may be happily adapted to quotations

\* The love of God and of man cannot be severed: Philo Q. in Gen. l. iii. § 42. See 1 John iv. 7, 8: 20, 21, &c.

† Rom. xiii. 8—10.

‡ Prel. Diss. x. p. 412. But in verse 31, we read simply, “it has been said.” This, however, must be understood in its necessary relation to what has been already stated, and thus ceases to be ambiguous: for it must be always right “to complete the briefer by the fuller, and not to cut down the fuller to suit the briefer statement.” (Trench p. 162.)

from common glosses and traditions, it would have justly appeared inaccurate and irreverent, if applied to the divine law, which was spoken to Moses individually, and by him authoritatively repeated to the people, and of which not the minutest particular could possibly fail.\* The appeals of Jesus to the Scripture, "which cannot be broken,"† were always solemn, reverential, and precise, as the reference of a Son to the words of a beloved Father; for He explicitly denies that He ever spoke of Himself.‡ It has, moreover, been the usual custom of the advocates of tradition to represent it as orally delivered, and handed down from Moses, or other inspired messengers of heaven, as equally authoritative with the inspired word;§ but though this cannot be admitted, and many "proverbs of the ancients"|| were alike false and mischievous, others were no doubt wise and wholesome.

It is also certain that the words adduced in this discourse are not always quoted from the Old Testament, either literally or in substance. The precept, indeed, "thou shalt not kill," was engraven on the tables of stone on Mount Sinai; and the perpetual obligation, which it involves, is uniformly recognised by the Lord,

\* Above verses 17, 18; Luke xvi. 17.

† John x. 34—36.

‡ John xii. 49.

§ See Philo Jud. de Judic § 3, p. 561. He represents the unwritten laws or doctrines of ancient men, as landmarks which may not be removed.

|| See 1 Sam. xxiv. 13.

and by his apostles, as one important particular of that law of love, which the Christian is enabled to fulfil in its true spiritual import. For it implies far more than the letter signifies. St. John explicitly asserts that "he who hates his brother is a murderer;"\* because, whatever may be his actual conduct, he is in a state of mind, inconsistent with the requirements of the law, and, unless restrained by circumstances or by fear, might be soon hurried to the actual commission of the crime of consummated hatred, which has its root† in cherished feelings of bitterness and anger.

But it had been said, "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed;" and since the reason assigned for this rule, "*for* in the image of God made He man," is eternally true, this seems to be a plain intimation of the unchangeable character of the law thus enunciated.‡ Moses indeed positively declared that the murderer should be put to death, and that no pecuniary compensation should be taken in mitigation of this sentence.§

But the ordinary saying, here quoted, represented the murderer as only obnoxious to the judgment. This important variation seems to have been generally overlooked. Tertullian|| and Chrysostom quote the

\* 1 John iii. 15. See James ii. 8—11.

† Chrysost. T. vii. p. 160.

‡ Gen. ix. 6.

§ Num. xxxv. 31.

|| Pro non occides, qui dixerit fratri suo Racha reus erit gehennæ.  
Tertull. de Pudic. chap. vi. Aperte Dominus ampliâns legem iram in



first clause, (of verse 21,) and then rapidly pass on to the next verse, as if they had thus comprehended the whole mind of Christ, in connexion with two varying dispensations. The latter says, "men had meditated sufficiently on the simple precept; it was now time to lead them to something higher."\* It is more probable that a spirit of false philanthropy had already regarded the criminal with too great leniency, and unduly relaxed the Mosaic law. Murder itself was fearfully prevalent at that epoch; and the sanctity of human life was little regarded, even by the rulers of Israel.† The exceeding sinfulness of sin was strangely forgotten, and evil was cherished, without any adequate sense either of its vileness or of its consequences.

The language of the Lord is parabolical throughout, clothing the spiritual and immutable in the form locally and temporarily most significant, or best adapted to the current mode of thought. But it is most remarkable that the least degree of criminality, and of consequent danger, which he indicates, as resting upon a passionate man, is identical with that connected with the overt act of murder in the ordinary tradition.

"The judgment" seems to refer to the inferior courts, established in each town of Judea; and "the

*fratrem homicidio superponit ne verbo quidem malo permittit expungi de Orat: chap. x.* Augustine's notion, that "in each case the old rule stands fast, however there may be a new unfolded from it," seems peculiarly unhappy, whatever Mr. Trench may think: p. 188.

\* Chrysost. T. vii. p. 159.

† See Acts xxiii. 12—15.

council" to the Sanhedrim, or superior court of seventy-two members, under the presidency of the High Priest; whose power was greater, and whose sentences were probably more terrible, extending to death itself. "Hell fire," (literally, the Gehenna of fire,) indicates the valley of (the son of) Hinnom, which was situated on the East of Jerusalem; the place in which the idolatrous Israelites had caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire of Moloch, whilst they attempted to drown their cries by the sound of drums and tambarines, from which it obtained the name of Tophet; and the present receptacle of the filth and offal of the city, on account of which fires were kept constantly burning there.\* Hence the term Gehenna at once implied an object of abhorrence, and became a most impressive and appalling image of terror. Human tribunals could not literally take cognisance of excited passions or reproachful epithets, nor was banishment to that valley ever literally inflicted on a living man, although the corpse of a criminal might have been ignominiously thrown there, in aggravation of his punishment. But Isaiah† has already unfolded the terrors thus symbolised.

"Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king it is *prepared*; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of Jehovah

\* See Jer. vii. 31; Josh. xv. 8; xviii. 16; Campbell Prel. Diss. vi. § 21: See Heb. Lex. in v. *Toph. Gehenna* is equivalent to "the valley of Hinnom."

† Isaiah xxx. 33; and lxvi. 24.

like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it." And in that day of glory and of blessing, so earnestly anticipated by the church, when "all flesh shall come to worship before the Lord," the evangelical prophet solemnly declares, at the very close of his glowing visions of sublime joy and consummated triumph, that "they shall go forth and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against Him. For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh."

The place of everlasting torment, *prepared* for the devil and his angels, in which the impenitent must have their portion, is similarly exhibited in the Gospels.\* But the distinction between Gehenna and Hades, the grave, or invisible state of departed souls, (not spirits)† is unhappily lost in our version, in which both terms are alike rendered "hell." Probably much false speculation has consequently been broached in the interpretation of the Apostles' Creed.‡

\* Matt. xxv. 41; Mark ix. 43—48.

† See Heb. iv. 12; 1 Thess. v. 23. This must be remembered in order to explain Luke xxiii. 43; see Eccles. xii. 7; Psalm xxxi. 5; Luke xxiii. 46; Acts vii. 59.

‡ "He descended into Hades." See Psalm xvi. 10; Acts ii. 27; 29; 31. His soul was separated from his body; he experienced the usual circumstances of true death. It is absurd to suppose that in such a state he preached to any. His spirit was with the Father. The pious dead spiritually lived to God; the wicked had perished without hope. The departed either needed not the preaching of Christ, or could not have been benefitted by it. Patristic figments on this point are peculiarly absurd. See Heb. xi. &c.

Lesser degrees of criminality may be visited with inferior punishments, as implied by the graduated language of the Lord. Temporary chastisements, and the present loss of those comforts, which are enjoyed by men of meek and quiet spirits, will afflict the passionate and contemptuous speakers; but eternal vengeance must overwhelm those who hate their brethren;\* and therefore we must diligently suppress the first emotions of anger, and keep it under, if we would escape the snare and the condemnation of the devil.

The Syriac word *Raca* is not expressive of strong feeling or sharp reproach, but rather of contempt and disdain.† A Jew told Augustine that it had no distinct signification, but was only the vague exclamation of an indignant mind;‡ but Chrysostom, who was so long resident at Antioch, and therefore must have had accurate sources of information, compares it to the common use of the pronoun “Thou,” addressed to a slave or inferior; and speaks of this as a familiar usage of the word in Syria. Others give it the force of “vain man” in the epistle of St. James, or interpret it as yet more contemptuous, as if it meant “vile fellow.” But we have no right to despise a fellow creature, or to insult a brother. Moreh, if a Syriac term, as Campbell supposes, is much stronger and more opprobrious, signifying “miscreant!” It seems therefore indicative of more furious passion, or of more virulent animosity,

\* 1 John iii. 15.           † Chrysost. T. vii. p. 163.

‡ Trench p. 196.

or of more desperate hatred, which can scarcely be predicated of the Greek term for "fool," for which it is sometimes taken. But however reckless men in general may be of their words, the Lord assures us, that we must give account of all that we say, as our justification or condemnation will be sealed at last, by these faithful indices of the real state of our hearts.\*

It is true, that there is justifiable anger, such as apostles exhibited in the case of Ananias and Sapphira and Elymas, when they were filled with the Holy Spirit; for even Emmanuel is said to have looked round about him with anger, when grieved by the hardness of men's hearts.† But this passion can only "*rest in the bosom of fools:*" for "he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly;" whereas "he that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; and he that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city."‡ From a spark of angry feeling, a vehement fire is too often kindled, which might consume a city. As words of reproach gather bitterness and virulence, guilt rapidly

\* Matt. xii. 34—37. Clement of Alexandria recognises no distinction between the speaker and the doer of evil. Strom. i. 10, 46. See Prov. x. 19; 31, 32; xiv. 23; xviii. 21; xiii. 3; xviii. 7; Psalm xxxix. 1; cxli. 3. (Chrysost. T. iii. p. 551—557.) Psalm xxxvii. 30, 31; xxxiv. 11—13: (1 Peter iii. 9—11;) Prov. xxxi. 26; James i. 26; iii.; Eph. iv. 29; v. 4. Chrysostom T. vii. p. 395, gives various explanations of ἀργόν in Matt. xii. 36, as either implying not to the purpose, false, involving *sycophancy*, vain, or obscene, shameless, and unbecoming a free man.

† Mark iii. 5.

‡ Eccles. vii. 9; Prov. xiv. 29; xvi. 32, and see xv. 18.

accumulates, and hatred is developed; they provoke a retort, and retorts lead to blows; and then how many a protracted conflict ends in murder! The world calls it manslaughter; but the Truth will not spare the cherished feeling, the source of so many fatal frays, which even Philo calls the fountain of transgression,\* and which unrestrained brings condemnation and death upon the maddened soul. Let us, therefore, take heed to our spirits; for it is not the actual words about which we are to be solicitous, but the feeling of which those specified seemed to be the ordinary and most emphatic expression; for those words under certain circumstances may be lawfully used,† but that feeling can never be righteous.

A way of repentance, however, is still opened out to the most wretched criminal; although, as long as he continues in his present condition, he is obnoxious to condemnation, and utterly incapable of admission into the kingdom of heaven, because a wilful *reviler*,‡ and as such necessarily without hope. Jesus, therefore, here proceeds, in a striking parabolical manner, to urge the duty of immediate reconciliation with an offended brother, whether we have merely spoken unjustly, or acted without love, *against* him, before we approach the altar of God, or presume to engage in any necessary act, even of religious worship.

\* Quod Deus Immut. § 16. *οργη* and *θυμός* are combined, de Agric. § 4.

† See Trench p. 197 note.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 10.

It will be remembered, that under the Levitical law no oblation could be acceptably offered with *leaven*, thus inculcating the necessity of renouncing "all *malice* and wickedness," when we desire to approach a holy God. Any worshipper, who is conscious of such a state of mind, and of entertaining feelings of hatred or of unjust anger against his brother, or of having acted wrongfully towards him, will alike read and hear, or praise and pray, in vain.\* All his spiritual sacrifices will be rejected, until he repents and casts off this evil. Let him, therefore, break off at once, lest he add sin to sin; and let him (*in spirit*, at least) hasten to his offended brother, and first be reconciled to him, or do whatever lies in his power to conciliate him, and to eject every improper feeling from his own mind. For, then, if his brother will not yield, the suppliant, who suffers not "the sun to go down on his wrath,"† but suppresses its emotions, will be free from responsibility; and the calm thus restored to his bosom will enable him once more to hold sweet communion with a Heavenly Father. He needs no gift from us, but the sacrifice of our lust and passion will benefit ourselves, and be to Him a most acceptable holocaust; and the flame of His Spirit will descend to seal this upon our hearts, by at once hallowing our thoughts and refining our affections. But

\* Tertull. de Orat. chap. x. Ne prius ascendamus ad Dei altare, quam, si quid discordiæ vel offensæ cum fratribus contraxerimus, resolvamus. de Patient chap. xii.

† Eph. iv. 26.

if even an act of religious worship should be interrupted rather than enmity be maintained, it is evident that nothing will excuse obstinacy, delay, or careless indifference on such a subject. "Mercy is better than sacrifice;" Jehovah delights in the exercise of this attribute; and we most resemble Him, when it is also our delight. If then we are the offended parties, and not the offenders, how ready should we be to accept any offer of reconciliation, and cordially welcome our suppliant brother?\*

But we must not overlook the accompanying warning in this place. It occurs in a different context, at the close of the 12th chapter of St. Luke, following a call to an attentive consideration of the signs of the times, and succeeded by an earnest announcement of the immediate necessity of repentance. It may possibly admit, like other illustrations, of more than one interpretation;† but the simplest is the best. Reconciliation with our offended brother is necessary, if we would be freed from apprehension, or if we would escape the condemnation of hell; and "whatever our hand findeth to do, we should do at once, and with all our might," because this life is so uncertain, and judgment may so suddenly overwhelm us. And "vengeance belongeth unto God." Our brother has One that will plead for him; he may have committed his just cause to Him,

\* On this, see below, verses 44—48.

† Tertull. de Anim. chap. xxxv., gives very fanciful explanations, which it is useless to transcribe.



as David did, when persecuted by Saul, and as the apostle bids us do, if we suffer at the hands of others.\* We have sinned against God in wronging our brother; he is our accuser, and must be so, however forgiving and meek he may personally be; let us seek reconciliation with the greater Adversary; and that not only in respect to the hundred pence, which we owe to a fellow servant, but in respect of those *innumerable* talents, which we owe to our Master, of which that other debt swells the amount. Once summoned to the judgment seat, with malice in our hearts, or hatred and anger inflaming our bosoms, we must needs be delivered to the executioner of wrath, and be shut up under condemnation for ever. Our debt can never be paid in the eternal world. There "he that is filthy will remain for ever filthy, and he that is unjust will remain for ever unjust." *Here*, at present at least, perfect deliverance may be obtained from a gracious Saviour.

For Christ speaks now, not as a Judge, but as a Saviour. His invitations are the overflowings of unbounded love; for it is still "the day of salvation, and an accepted time." His Gospel is proclaimed *freely* to all; our whole debt may be cancelled, and perfect reconciliation sealed upon our hearts. But then Christ will sit as a Judge, and must condemn the impenitent; the fountain now opened for sin and for uncleanness will be no longer accessible; "the atonement" will be no longer available to those, who have not previously received it.

\* 1 Sam. xxiv. 15; 1 Peter iv. 19.

## § 2.

But the Heavenly Teacher proceeds. "*Ye have heard that it was said TO THE ANCIENTS, thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman\* to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*" (v. 27, 28.)

The letter of the commandment had been correctly set forth; but without sufficient explanation; and the laxity, with which divorces were permitted by the Jewish teachers, led to the frequent violation of the will of God, when the deluded sinner imagined that he was keeping the commandment. We are, therefore, reminded that it is really violated by the indulgence of licentious desire, or, as the words before us imply, by a looking "with the intention and purpose of thereby feeding desire,"† as it had primary respect to the heart; and the real occasion of so many cruel divorces was no doubt the wandering, yea, the cherished wandering, of the eye to some stranger, who thus quickly became the object of unlawful preference. But the last commandment of the law had explicitly said, "thou shalt not *covet*;" so that our Lord had really no novel precept to unfold.

\* Campbell and Boothroyd limit this expression to a married woman; but the Fathers rightly gave it a more extensive signification. Job xxxi. 1, affords a striking parallel, frequently adduced, as by Chrysost. T. iv. p. 291.

† Augustine: Trench p. 207; Chrysost. T. vii. p. 172.

It is unnecessary to refer to the urgency, with which, in an age of unbounded profligacy,\* the apostles prescribed austere purity of manners, and warned their converts against the indulgence of customary sensuality. Their testimony was not in vain in the Lord. But the dangerous exaggerations of earnest but misguided zeal, on the subject of celibacy, subsequently led to a fatal re-action; and the morals of those, who outwardly acknowledged the truth, soon became fearfully corrupted.† Nor if we look around us, can we feel any great satisfaction at our actual prospects. The voice of warning ought to be raised more extensively and more audibly; and parents and teachers need to be reminded in a voice of thunder of their solemn responsibilities, and of the importance of more affectionate and watchful superintendence over the young; nay, the strong arm of the law must be exerted to put down an increasing trade in human infamy and sorrow.

Perhaps we may have suffered much from the too exclusive study of the classics in youth, though a Milton derived moral strength from polluted pages, which excited disgust in a pure bosom. More frequently models of taste and beautiful composition have served to render us indifferent to the evil of fashionable vices, to defile the imagination, to obscure the glory of Christianity, and to clothe temptation with greater

\* Eph. v. 12, &c.

† Tertull. de Virg. Veland. chap. xiv.; de Jejun. chap. xvii.; Cyprian de Hab. Virg.; and Ep. 5; 6; 67, &c.

power.\* On the other hand, the crowded dwellings of the poor, and the love of dress, have tended to destroy the sense of decency, and to break down the bulwarks of propriety and of virtue, in the neglected classes of society. Vice at least is increasingly rampant; and sad proofs of gross immorality, where better things might have been expected, are constantly occurring; and we seem powerless to restrain the spreading conflagration.

Leighton beautifully says, "chastity is a delicate, tender grace; and can scarcely endure the much naming of itself, far less of those things that are contrary to it." This thought often (perhaps unduly) restrains the voice of warning; for ignorance is impossible; but we cannot dismiss the subject without transcribing some of his holy admonitions; since "many have fallen unawares into every form of sin, because they did not (at once) quench the rising flame;"† and no man may safely "trust in his own perfection, though he were stronger

\* *Even* Aristotle considered it expedient to banish all loose discourse, as well as indecent statues and paintings, from places frequented by *youth*; (Polit. vii. 17,) and yet *we* are less cautious than he. Or can we anticipate any good result from the profuse exhibition of *the nude* at Sydenham, or in our Picture Galleries? That which pretends to anticipate the restoration of humanity to the purity of the ideal confesses its unsuitableness to the gaze of a public, neither restored to that purity, nor anticipating it, and can only pander to the passions of the sensuous many, and perhaps ensnare inexperienced youth.

† Chrysost. T. i. p. 750.

than Sampson, holier than David, or wiser than Solomon ; for every one of these fell.”\*

“Labour to have the heart possessed with a deep apprehension of the holiness and purity of God, and then of his presence and eye upon all thy actions, yea, thy most secret thoughts.† His eye is more piercing than that any wickedness can be hid from Him ; and more pure than to behold it without indignation. The darkness is as noon day to Him. I cannot steal a thought out of his sight, though it be never so sudden and short. Then think, if I pretend to communion and converse with my God, He is all holiness, therefore uncleanness can never attain that to which I aspire. What communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial ? And shall I lose or hazard the sweetness of His presence for so base a delight ? How can I offer that heart to Him in prayer, which hath been wallowing in the mire of unclean practice or imagination ? Resolve to drive out the assaults‡ to which you are incident : how shall I do or think thus ? My holy God is looking on me.” This was Joseph’s preservative, “shall I do this evil and sin against God ?” yea, “watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”

Some, indeed, according to the ancient myth, escape by stuffing their ears with wax, as they pass the Siren’s

\* Chaucer.

† That thoughts pollute is implied in the arguments concerning the Vestal in Seneca Controv. i. 2 ; Exc. vii. 8.

‡ Forcibly expressed, Chrysost. T. v. p. 507.

haunts. Ulysses maintained his ground, through the constancy of his loftier and more resolute intellect.\* Orpheus more admirably drowned the enchanting voice, and confounded the tempter, by singing Pæns, or hymns of adoration to the gods. And surely, as Bacon † observes, divine meditation excels the pleasure of the sense, both in power and in sweetness. Let us cherish this, that our souls, charmed by the preciousness of a Saviour, and devoted to his love and service, may effectually “mortify the deeds of the body,” and thus, through the power of the indwelling Spirit, ‡ break the meshes of that net of gigantic texture, in which the poor entangled victims perish so miserably before our eyes. §

But the Lord warns his disciples against proximate occasions of sin, in a general parabolical form, that they might be the better secured against the temptations of the flesh.

\* But as hard rocks are worn away by soft water, so the pure may fall by repeated solicitations; (see Tertull. de Cult. Fæm. § 2,) our safety then is only in the grace of Jesus.

† Works V. x. p. 208.

‡ Rom. viii. 13.

§ It is remarkable that in Philo, (de Decal. § 24, 25, p. 201, and de Spec. Leg. p. 300, ed. Mang.,) Mark, (ix. 19,) Luke, (xviii. 20,) and in Paul's epistle to the Romans, (xiii. 9,) the order of the 6th and 7th commandments is inverted. Tertullian follows Philo in arguing from *this*, that adultery is the greatest possible wrong that can be done to our neighbour. The Alexandrian Jew anticipates the Fathers in the extent, to which he carries the law of chastity.

*“And if thy right eye offend\* thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell: (Gehenna.) And if thy right hand offend\* thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell:” (Gehenna.) (v. 29, 30.)*

A similar passage occurs in a later chapter, and also in the Gospel of St. Mark,† where the disciples are warned against doing anything, which would ensnare a brother, or throw a stumbling block in his way. We cannot therefore limit this lesson, with Chrysostom, to the mere duty of shunning the company of friends and associates, however dear to us, or otherwise serviceable, if they prove the means of drawing us into sin;‡ but must apply it to every known source of evil, or occasion of loss and injury to the soul, which is equally to be shunned.

The hand, which might be wantonly stretched out to smite a neighbour, and the wandering eye, must be alike restrained at any cost. The temptation, which was unforeseen, but which has unexpectedly ensnared us, must be diligently avoided for the future; whatever

\* Or “ensnare.”

† Matt. xviii. 8, 9; Mark ix. 43—48.

‡ T. iii. p. 38. (To dishonour or renounce their friendship to render our salvation more secure.) T. iv. p. 119.

it might have been; whether the glass of wine, or the elegant dress, or the insinuating voice, or the attractive music, or the admired works of art. No situation, however profitable or agreeable, must be retained, which exposes our morals to corruption, or our souls to danger. No worldly honours or advantages can counterbalance the acquisition of one vice, or the formation of one habit of evil, or the lapse of the soul into lukewarmness or formality. No company must be frequented, no amusement, however innocent in itself, must be indulged in, which will tend to deaden our devotions, and unfit us for communion with our God. Above all no associate must ever be permitted to ingratiate himself into our favor, who is not ashamed to make a mock at sin, or whose frivolity tends to impair the delicate sensibility of the soul to the hatefulness of vice. It was the lesson of universal experience, which Menander expressed, when he said, "evil communications corrupt good manners." The apostle only re-echoes his testimony, and thus shows how the Holy Spirit graciously condescends to apply the lessons of human experience to the guidance of indiscreet and unestablished Christians.\*

And thus in relation to others, the parable, as given in St. Mark, is explained and applied by St. Paul in a similar manner. "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother

\* 1 Cor. xv. 33. Otherwise he might have quoted Prov. xiii. 20.



stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”\* For “when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”† For though lawful, “it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.”‡ It is the law of love to God, which stimulates to self denial in one case; it is the law of love to man, which requires it in the other. We must neither rush unbidden into situations of danger ourselves, nor do any thing wittingly, which will draw our neighbours into them. Present gain is dearly purchased by the loss of the soul, or even of spiritual privileges; better live maimed and halt in the heavenly city, than be exposed to the abominations and fire of Gehenna with unmutilated limbs; better far take up a daily cross, and deny ourselves, that we may be *enabled* to keep under our bodies, and thus overcome all the lusts of the flesh, than by careless self indulgence in lawful pleasures to excite and foster them.§

\* Rom. xiv. 21.

† 1 Cor. viii. 12, 13. and see x. 31—33.

‡ Rom. xiv. 20.

§ Philo says that temperance (*ἐγκράτεια* de vit Cont. § 4,) is the basis of all virtues, bringing with it health, safety, and immortality; and that *desire* is a many headed monster, (Quæst in Exod. i. 19,) the fountain of all evil, wrongs, and crimes, which becomes all in all to the unhappy wretch in whose bosom it rages. de Decal § 28; 12: de Mund Opif § 53.

## § 3.

*"It hath been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement; but I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced,\* committeth adultery." (v. 31, 32.)*

The Pharisees pretended that it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife "for every cause." But when they hypocritically tempted Jesus by this question, He answered them by simple reference to the original institution of marriage, on which He grounded the solemn inference, as a law binding upon every conscience, "what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." They rejoined, "why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" He replied, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so;" and then repeated the statement before us.† We may conclude from the silence of His enemies on that occasion, that this really involves no contradiction of the law, as otherwise they would have "taken hold of His words."‡ For the force of the qualifying clause of the original

\* Justin M. Apol. p. 62, cites this clause only: "whoever marries one divorced by another man commits adultery."

† Matt. xix. 3—9. Cf. Mark x. 2—12.

‡ See Luke xx. 26.

precept,\* here omitted, was the subject of grave discussion in the opposite rabbinical schools.† Why, then, should not Jesus adopt a stricter interpretation of words, thus apparently ambiguous? If we justly regard Him as a Prophet expounding the law, and not as a Lawgiver, it is at least obvious that He cannot be “a higher witness for the sanctity of marriage” than Moses,‡ on whose testimony He argues, and whose words were the commands of God.§

In times of innocence, divorce, of course, could not have occurred. Its necessity arose from the entrance of

\* Deut. xxiv. 1. “If she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness (or, matter of nakedness) in her.” Boothroyd renders, “some unpleasant defect,” that is, “some very great bodily blemish, or some base immoral habit.” But such vagueness in enunciating a law, which the husband might carry out at pleasure, seems scarcely intelligible. The adulteress might have been put to death; but probably this sentence was seldom executed; (cf. Matt. i. 18, 19,) and may not Moses have legislated for such cases? Their constant occurrence is pre-supposed in the rule of Jesus. Possibly lewd and indecent conduct, where the overt act of sin has not been committed, but something more than suspicion is necessarily excited by undoubted improprieties, may have been implied. Any reference to mere bodily defects seems to be precluded by the supposition in the context, that the woman might be married to another, and afterwards recalled by her first husband.

† See M'Caul's *Old Paths* p. 514—525. Josephus asserted that Moses permitted husbands to divorce their wives *on any pretence*, and himself acted accordingly. *Antiq.* iv. 8, 25; *vit.* Joseph.

‡ As Mr. Trench supposes. Augustine thought that both legislated in the same direction; and that to require a bill of divorcement was not to encourage divorces, but to throw impediments in the way. See p. 166 and 314.

§ As appears Matt. xv. 4.

sin into the world, and from that untractable disposition of mankind, and not of the Jews only, which under such circumstances would render the continued inviolability of the contract intolerable, or a cause of fresh sin; and on this account it is *still* permitted. Justice, at least, requires that the innocent party should be released from the bonds of a covenant, no longer holy, and no longer conducive to the ends for which it was instituted, because virtually dissolved by "the fornication," or impurity of the woman; and this is the case to which the Lord here limits the permission.

Milton, indeed, contended with much force and eloquent declamation for liberty of divorce in all cases of gross misconduct or irreconcilable disagreement, and boldly maintained that the language of the Lord must be explained in a figurative sense, in order to reconcile it to the voice of reason and of charity. Even Augustine thus regarded the word "fornication," as implying "every graver sin which corrupts and defiles the soul." But, as Luther observed, no trope can be admitted in Scripture, unless where the context manifestly requires it, or the literal sense is evidently false or absurd. Nay, the poet himself elsewhere maintains, that in drawing up a law, or in composing a definition, the most exact and appropriate words must be used, and that these must be interpreted, not in their metaphorical, but in their proper signification.\* This unquestionable axiom

\* Christian Doctrine c. 10, p. 227: ed. Bohn.

sufficiently refutes a theory, which wholly ignores the distinct contrast in the present Scripture, and the fact that no limitation whatever occurs in the parallel passages of St. Luke and St. Mark.\* And where could we draw the line, if a figurative interpretation were once adopted? What "cruel abuses" would inevitably result from "the vagueness and uncertainty," in which it is necessarily involved.†

The law of the early church limited the right of divorce to the case of adultery.‡ Some, indeed, sought to reconcile the institutions of Christ and of Rome, and to make the usual compromise between the strictness of the one, and the laxity of the other; but Chrysostom expressly refuses to recognise human legislation on the subject, because God alone is our Judge.§

The disciples understood the Lord literally, and therefore exclaimed, "if the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry."|| So low was the estimation in which females were then held amongst the Jews;¶ so frequently was married life embittered by the occurrence of "irreconcilable

\* Luke xvi. 18; Mark x. 11, 12.

† Trench p. 211, 212.

‡ Bunsen Hippol. V. iii. p. 357.

§ Op. T. v. p. 280, 281; 748. The absurdity and injustice of our own law seem to be generally acknowledged; though with many other recognised evils left without a remedy.

|| Matt. xix. 10.

¶ See references to the Talmud in Old Paths p. 24, 25; 495, &c. Joseph. Antiq. iv. 8, § 4: 15; Philo Quod Omn. Prob. Lib. § 18, &c.

enmities," arising from intolerable waywardness, or incompatibility of temper. Hence, no doubt, the disciples concluded with Maimonides, that divorces are necessary under such circumstances to preserve peace and domestic quiet; and therefore thought that, if the possibility of obtaining such a release was cut off, the idea of contracting a marriage would be intolerable. It is true that the disciples sometimes grossly mistook the meaning of their Lord; but then He never left them in error; so that if they had misapprehended his meaning on this occasion, some intimation would have been given of the nature of their mistake, and a further explanation of the subject would have rendered its recurrence impossible.\* This, however, has not been done, because they were not now in error.

#### § 4.

*"Again ye have heard that it hath been said to THE ANCIENTS, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; but I say unto you, swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God's*

\* Professor Lee thus interprets Malachi ii. 16; (quoted Chrysost. T. v. p. 280, 281.) "When one hates, he dismisses (saying) Jehovah, the God of Israel, has (so) commanded. And so he conceals violence with a cloak." (Hebr. Lex.) Boothroyd translates,—*"I hate him that putteth away his wife, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, and him that covereth violence with his garment, &c."* That divorces ought not be granted with too great facility, Sir W. Scott forcibly argues in his celebrated judgment in the case of *Evans v. Evans*. 1 Hagg. Rep. p. 36—40.

*throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great king. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let\* YOUR COMMUNICATION BE YEA, YEA; NAY, NAY; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."* (v. 33—37.)

The sin of neglecting to perform contracts or engagements, made with an oath, was probably the point indicated by the Elders; but the Lord would have his disciples enter into all their mutual contracts without any such solemn adjurations. They are altogether unnecessary, where strict love prevails, as that necessarily involves implicit faithfulness in every social relation of life.†

The language of the Alexandrian Philo on the subject of oaths strikingly illustrates the deep reverential feeling of the Jews, though not free from superstition, with reference to that awful Name, which they scrupled even to repeat.‡ The Essenes never swore at all, and regarded the habit of abstaining from oaths as involving

\* Rather, "let your yea be yea, and your no, no." (Boothroyd.) This is the reading of Chrysostom T. vii. p. 178; T. viii. p. 527.

† Chrysostom strangely accounts for the omission of any direct reference to the law of theft, by saying that the thief sometimes swears; but that he who neither swears nor lies would never steal; so that it is partly on this account that the Lord here denounces the sin of swearing, because falsehood arises from theft! T. vii. p. 177.

‡ The law is explicit, Exod. xx. 7; forbidding all irreverent, as well as untruthful, mention of the name of Jehovah.

that of truthfulness;\* and this was acknowledged by their admirer to be most admirable, expedient, and conformable to reason. The mere word of a good man should be the most solemn oath; since that is ever truthful and unequivocal. But Philo praises those, who, if they were at any time compelled to swear, did so with much hesitation and demur, striking awe into the minds of the spectators by their solemn manner, and then *only half uttered the formula*,† or perhaps (if required,) swore by the health of living, or by the memory of deceased, parents, or by the sun, the stars, the heaven, or the whole universe. No censure seemed to him too severe for those reckless and impious men, who, on all occasions, and in all places, and in the most trifling matters, whether themselves clean or unclean in body or soul, rashly appealed to the Creator. Frequent swearing is no pledge of truthfulness, but causes distrust in the minds of the wise.‡

But the Lord necessarily rejects all subterfuges and evasions, and the rather, because they were subterfuges and evasions; for it is observable that he does not mention a direct appeal to the Name of God, but only adjurations by the creatures, in manifest and irreverent

\* Philo Quod Omn Prob. Lib. § 12. Cf. de Decal. § 17.

† This betrays a Platonist. See the elliptical *μὰ τόν* Plato Gorg § 49, with Routh's note. At other times Socrates swore *by the dog*: Cratyl § 60; Gorg § 37; 83; Apol Socr. § 7, &c.

‡ Philo de Spec Leg. p. 270, 271: ed. M.



forgetfulness of the Creator, "as if these did not virtually involve a reference to Him, whose they are." Men's consciences told them, that it would be *wrong* to appeal on such occasions to Jehovah; but all such appeals were exactly equivalent, no less awful, no less inconsistent with religious feeling, and therefore must be all renounced.\*

The language of St. James is nearly identical with that before us. "Above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by *any other oath*; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." (v. 12.)

Chrysostom understood the precept literally, and enforced it on all occasions with the greatest vehemence, especially in a long course of sermons preached by him at Antioch during Lent,† in which he successfully‡ protested against all oaths as impious, and urged his hearers to restrict their communications to yes and no under all circumstances, because "whatsoever is more

\* Trench p. 220, thus explains "at all," as referring to all those kinds of oaths subsequently specified. Certainly we cannot acquit Socrates of irreverence.

† See T. i. p. 59; 437, &c. &c.; T. iv. p. 401, (as a new law.)

‡ He congratulates his hearers on the result, apparent, as he says, in every household: T. v. p. 3, 4. It appears that a custom prevailed of taking the Gospel into the hand, and of thus approaching the holy table in the church, and stretching out the book in solemn adjuration, on very trifling occasions. This is of course most vehemently condemned.

than these cometh of Satan.”\* A striking reference to the history of Saul and Jonathan, in the war with the Philistines, forcibly illustrates the folly, the danger, and the complicated evil, which results from rash oaths,† about which there can be no question. Coleridge says, “they are altogether bad, foolish, unchristian things, except as mere remembrancers of the guilt of deliberate falsehood, at the same time occasioning the affirmer to be calm and deliberate.” The Fathers, indeed, generally condemned them altogether;‡ but Augustine, though perplexed by the language of the Lord, saw that this was a false and superficial conclusion,§ and that this language was not so absolute as it seems.

For Jeremiah thus delivers the word of Jehovah. “If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me; and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove; and thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory.”|| The language of Moses is no less striking. “Thou shalt

\* He thus interprets τοῦ πονηρῶν T. i. p. 804; T. iii. p. 44; T. vi. p. 796. At T. viii. p. 547, he says, truly swearing is a snare of Satan. He dwells upon the history in Mark vi.; Judges xxi.; Josh. ix., to illustrate his assertion.

† See 1 Sam. xiv.

‡ Justin M. Apol. i. 66; Clemens A. Pæd. iii. 11, 79, &c.; Euseb. H. E. vi. 5; Præp. Evang. i. 4; xiii. 13.

§ Trench p. 217, 218.

|| Jer. iv. 1, 2. Contrast v. 2.

fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by His name," or render to Him the highest possible honour and adoration.\* Nor can we forget how Jehovah is repeatedly introduced in Holy Scripture swearing by Himself; and how the apostle dwells on this circumstance in the epistle to the Hebrews, as investing the priesthood of Christ with superior glory,† and as also designed in wonderful condescension by the God of Abraham to display the immutability of his counsel, and the irrevocable character of his blessing, more clearly; as amongst men "an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife."‡

It cannot be supposed, therefore, that *such* oaths are unholty, unlawful, sinful things.§

God's word is unquestionably true; and yet even *that* derived an additional solemnity from the interposition of an oath!||

But because there are rare occasions, on which it

\* Deut. vi. 13.

† Heb. vii. 20—22: as the surety of a better covenant.

‡ Heb. vi. 13—18.

§ Of the Patriarchs, see Gen. xxi. 31; xxiv. 3; 9; xxvi. 31; xxxi. 53, &c. But Chrysostom says oaths are sinful now, though not formerly so! Ap. T. vii. p. 179. This is unintelligible to those who believe the distinctions between right and wrong to be immutable in unaltered circumstances.

|| Many regarded it as incongruous; but though His words differ nothing from oaths in respect of their certainty, Philo says, that it is introduced to reprove the weakness of the creature, and then to encourage, and thus to help him. de Sacrif. Ab. and C. § 28, 29. See de Leg. Alleg. l. iii. § 72, 73.

may become an acceptable act of divine worship, and may be beneficially interposed for the removal of all doubts, and for the confirmation of momentous truth, it seems the more necessary to reserve so awful a sanction for such occasions, and jealously to exclude it from ordinary conversation, and the common business or intercourse of life, that its effect may not be weakened and impaired, by any profane and irreverent associations. If the High Priest had intruded into the sanctuary on any other day than that prescribed in the law, he would have been cut off for his presumption and irreverence; but *then* he entered boldly and acceptably, because "in truth, and judgment, and righteousness," according to the will of God.

A reference to the epistles of Paul will suffice to establish the true interpretation of the evangelical precept, and to bring it into harmony, as we must endeavour to bring it, with the uniform tenor of the law and of the prophets, which the Son of man "came not to destroy but to fulfil." It cannot at least be admitted, that we must abide by the words of Jesus, in opposition to all others; for, though frail and fallible in ordinary circumstances, the apostle could not err, when he wrote by the inspiration of the Spirit for our guidance; for then his words were as much the words of Christ, with respect to their holiness and truth, as those recorded by the evangelists. But in reality there is no opposition between the Lawgiver, and the Son, and the apostle. It is only the delusion,

arising from the too common but dangerous habit of superficial minds, to insist upon a literal interpretation of one or more isolated passages, without reference to the general tenor of the Scriptures, which throws any obscurity on the subject.

Paul certainly has not limited himself to the simple mode of communication, which has been considered indispensable. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost."\* And again, "as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay,"† or vacillating and equivocating. "Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul."‡ And "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not."§ And, yet again, "the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not."||

It cannot be supposed, that he wrote unadvisedly and ill in these solemn passages, or that he was forsaken by the Spirit of his Master, and (without any adequate cause) instigated by the Evil One, so repeatedly, to transgress a precept, the observance of which is so easy, even to unconverted men. But why not? The

\* Rom. ix. 1.

† 2 Cor. i. 18.

‡ Ib. 23.

§ Ib. xi. 31.

|| Gal. i. 20. Trench refers to these passages, and the words of Augustine: *præcepti violati reum Paulum, præsertim in epistolis conscriptis atque editis ad spiritalem vitam salutemque populorum, nefas est dicere.* (de Mendac. chap. xv.)

occasion was solemn, the communication privileged; and less awful words would have been inadequate to produce the impression, or "the end of all strife," which with such confirmatory words he desired to effect; and therefore his conscience reproved him not.\*

We conclude, therefore, that oaths are lawful, or that appeals may be made to the Lord, when the cause of God, or of truth and justice, which must needs be His, would suffer without them; though reason and experience alike convince us, that such occasions must be comparatively rare.

Mr. Trench refers the Lord's words, "whatsoever is more than these (yea and nay) cometh of evil," to the fact that the demand for oaths is a recognition of the untruthfulness of man. The fact, indeed, is true; but then this could not have been the principle, on which Jehovah swore by Himself, in condescension to our weakness. It seems more natural to apply those words exclusively to ordinary conversation, when swearing is altogether evil, and can only arise from a sinful and irreverent feeling, be the oath what it may.

The obligation to accomplish vows once made is unalterable. The Psalmist repeatedly refers to those, which he had vowed in the time of trouble, and which he hastened to accomplish on his deliverance, in praise and thank-offerings.† The apostle, as we have already

\* See 1 Cor. iv. 4; 2 Cor. i. 12.

† See Psalm lvi. 12; lxi. 5; 8; lxvi. 13; xxii. 25; l. 14; cxvi. 14; 18 with Psalm cxxxii. 2; 2 Chron. xv. 14; Eccles. v. 4, &c.

mentioned, had shorn his head at Cenchrea in consequence of a voluntary vow; and when he came to Jerusalem, he found four brethren belonging to the church there, who had taken some similar vows.\* For, when the Lord denounced the absurd and hypocritical evasions of the Pharisees, who distinguished between an oath, (or, rather, vow) by the temple, or by the gold of the temple, and by the altar, or by the gift upon the altar, as if the one might be violated with impunity, and not the other, He asserted the equal solemnity of all such vows, without giving the least intimation that they were to be considered unlawful for the future, thus clearly implying the contrary.† But, as we are free from the ceremonial law, we can scarcely regard them as expedient for such poor, frail, and inconstant creatures as we are, whether they have reference to God, or to our neighbours.‡

\* Acts xviii. 18; xxi. 23, 24 (ἐὐχὴν.)

† Matt. xxiii. 16—22.

‡ If thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee: Deut. xxiii. 22. The vows of unmarried daughters and wives might be disallowed by fathers and husbands, and then ceased to be obligatory. Num. xxx. 3—8.

Jephthah's rash vow, Judges xi. 30, 31: could not be recalled, (verse 35.) It was doubtless recorded to restrain a dangerous custom, which ensnared many souls. It is obvious that the daughter in that case was not put to death, (which would have been an act of atrocious guilt,) but only constrained to a life of perpetual celibacy, which in Israel was a great calamity and reproach: see verses 37; 39, and an able note on the subject by Jonathan Edwards.

## § 5.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if a man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." (v. 38—42.)

The words "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," occur in three distinct passages of the law;\* but not thus simply and nakedly. The context must be consulted to show with what object the various laws, of which this is only a fragment, were enacted. For it cannot be supposed, that the divine Prophet would sanction by His example such a garbled quotation, (as this seems to be,) however common such a vicious and unjustifiable course may be amongst false and superficial Teachers. Is he not rather referring to the traditionist, who thus summed up in a short proverbial form, easily remembered by the people, an odious maxim of retaliation, which it was supposed that every injured

\* Exod. xxi. 24; Levit. xxiv. 20; Dent. xix. 21. Tertull. de Patient. chap. vi. says, *nondum enim patientia in terris, quia nec fides*: but there was faith in the true Israelites in all ages.



man might carry out at pleasure? The contrary is generally asserted; and probably no passage has been more frequently alleged, as affording distinct proof of the striking line of contrast, which distinguishes the Jewish from the Christian code of morality. Even Chrysostom represents the conduct of David, when Saul once and again fell into his hands, and he exercised forbearance and kindness towards his persecutor, as the more admirable, because the law *then permitted retaliation*, so that he exceeded the bounds of the commandment!\* Such notions properly belong to the Gnostic and Manichean heresies, the advocates of which, as more profound and rational thinkers, consistently concluded from these premises, that the God of Israel and the God of Christians were irreconcilable adversaries, and maintained, as a fundamental principle, that the law and the Gospel emanated from different Authors! † But some soften the contrast by pointing out the distinction between retaliation and revenge; for these consider the law as either designed to restrain the

\* T. ii. p. 1010; 1040. See also T. iii. p. 75, on Psalm vii. 4, (= T. vi. p. 972, he did not consider that he had acted with becoming virtue, unless he had *shot beyond* the precept.) T. iv. p. 359; T. vi. p. 319, and Palladius Dial. de S. Chrysost. p. 31: (justus mensuras servilis legis modosque transiliens, et eo quod diligit Dominum ad sortem adoptionis libertatisque festinans sibi ipsi legis est author, ut Job xxxi. 1. Cf. 1 Cor. ix.) Compare Chrysost. T. v. p. 234—236. The Psalmist himself could not have entertained such views: Psalm cxix. 96.

† Tertull. adv. Marc i. 19.

resentment of an irritated man, by setting such a limit to his fury,\* or, at least, to check the wrong doer by the fear of just retribution; and therefore they contend that it is by no means inconsistent with goodness, as the Manicheans asserted.† The legislation of Christ, however, is certainly not *parallel* with the rule which he cites; neither can it be sufficient to allege, that the different precepts belong to different domains of man's life, the one internal, the other external;‡ for, though this may be strictly true as regards the Mosaic precept in its real meaning, the language of the Lord implies a decided contrast between two inconsistent precepts, one of which he must positively over-rule, if there is any accuracy in words.

There is, then, a difficulty; and we must endeavour patiently to untie the Gordian knot, and reconcile the apparent contradiction; unless the explanation already suggested is deemed sufficient.

We must not, however, be surprised or discouraged, if we meet with greater difficulties. They beset every path of investigation. We know how some filmy specks of cloudy matter in the material heavens, once the object of wonder and vague hypothesis, have been ascertained to consist of brilliant stellar points; how other nebulae have been resolved by patient observation, and the aid

\* Augustine. Trench p. 224, 225.

† Chrysost. T. vii. p. 160, 161.

‡ Trench p. 223. Chrysostom considers the old law as adapted to former times, but not to the present.

of powerful instruments, into similar clusters of marvellous arrangement; and how, although it was long thought that some other nebulæ, sparkling in mysterious distances, were altogether distinct from these in their characteristics, or finally irresolvable, and an ingenious theory was grounded upon this hasty hypothesis, this seems to have since fallen before more exact observation and mightier instruments. The result of scriptural researches has not been dissimilar. At first much of the Bible may have seemed to us a mass of confusion; but portions soon opened out into order and brilliant distinctness in the light of faith; others subsequently yielded to more prayerful and diligent investigation; and of the rest, which seemed so long to baffle our inquiry, and to defy our ken, and which were thought in a moment of temptation to be of a different, and therefore not of a divine, character, some have since been resolved, and thus lead us to the more confident anticipation of ultimately attaining to perfect knowledge of the whole; if we will but consent to wait, and not be ashamed to suspend our judgment, and to doubt a little longer.

Here, indeed, the difficulty may be more easily resolved. Retaliation, *as a rule* of personal action, never could have been enjoined, or even permitted, by Moses. It is as opposed to the commandment, as light to darkness; for the law, as laid down by him, to be habitually exemplified in our outward conduct, is essentially humane. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy-

self.”\* “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto† them.” The first is the exact Levitical precept, at once *brief* but *comprehensive*, which St. James calls “the royal law;” the latter is the rule enunciated by the Lord, as the substance of the whole law, and of the prophets, in relation to this point. All moral contrasts, then, must originate in misapprehension; and although development in the character of the dispensations of God, or rather in the practical application of fixed principles and of revealed truths, may be elsewhere recognised, this is not the case here. For Moses really enjoins love to enemies, as we shall presently see; and if that be felt, all desire of revenge must be extinguished, and retaliation becomes impossible, as it is *expressly* prohibited in the book of Proverbs,‡ in diametrical opposition to the supposed precept of the law.

This, no doubt, seems to be a light beyond the heathen. Demosthenes§ sneers at the barbaric notion of doing homage to those who have injured us, as a

\* Levit. xix. 18; Matt. xxii. 39, 40; and xix. 19; (*omitted* in the parallel passages Mark x. 19; Luke xviii. 20;) Rom. xiii. 9; James ii. 8; Mark xii. 31; 33; Luke x. 27—37. St. James considers respect of persons a plain violation of this law.

† See below chap. vii. 12.

‡ “Say not thou, I will recompense evil, but wait on the Lord, and He shall save thee.” (Prov. xx. 22.) And again, “say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.” (Prov. xxiv. 29.)

§ Orat. c. Mid.

sign of a dastardly spirit. Archilochus considered it a great thing to requite a wrong with terrible severity.\* The sophist Gorgias regarded that man as a virtuous citizen, who was competent to transact the business of the state, to serve his friends, and to punish his enemies;† and the historian Polybius describes the good man, as one that loves his friends and his country, and sympathises with these in hatred of their enemies.‡ Aristotle represents *magnanimous* men as never fierce, *except* towards those who have injured them, thus making this an exceptional case.§ In one remarkable passage, however, Plato introduces Socrates rising to a higher standard, and contending that, as it was *always wrong* to do evil to others, we ought *never to retaliate*, whatever we may suffer at their hands. But he calls this a paradoxical conclusion, which he was assured that very few admitted, or would admit.|| Callicles, moreover, is elsewhere represented taunting the renowned philosopher, and telling him that his philosophy would expose its votaries to the utmost contumely and wrong, and leave them without any means of self-defence; so that to use *plain* language, their enemies might *strike them on the cheek* with impunity!¶ How striking an approximation to the language of the Lord!

\* As cited by Theophilus ad Autol ii. 37.

† Plato Meno chap. iii.

‡ Hist. i. 14, 4.

§ Polit. viii. 7.

|| Crito § 10 p. 49.

¶ Gorg. § 91 p. 486; and see § 137, p. 508; § 175, p. 527.

Such a blow was considered peculiarly dishonourable, and most exasperating. Seneca, indeed, also acknowledges, that as it is disgraceful to be outdone in repaying benefits, it is not less so to exceed in requiting evil.\* He calls revenge an *inhuman* word, only differing from contumely in order of time, though it may be considered *just*.†

But the legislator of despised Israel, in an age of comparative barbarism, as his own history abundantly testifies, speaks with no hesitating or uncertain sound, and inculcates something higher and nobler, even than patient submission to wrong, and that in “a voice beyond nature,” plainly testifying by its own self evidencing light, that it was uttered by a God of love. The signal *philanthropy* of Moses, indeed, as exhibited in his personal career, and by many special enactments in his legislation, all breathing the utmost gentleness and kindness, is the subject of one of the best and most interesting of Philo’s tracts.

Amongst the passages,‡ to which he refers, the

\* Above all, says Philo, shun a contest in reproachful language, in which the victor is worse than the vanquished. De Agric. chap. xxiv. Compare what Chrysostom says of furious and passionate men. T. v. p. 628.

† De Ira ii. 32.

‡ They are Deut. xxiii. 19; Levit. xix. 13; Deut. xxiv. 10, 19, 20; xxii. 1, 2; Exod. xxiii. 10, 11; Levit. xxv. 8, &c.; Deut. x. 19; xxiii. 7; xx. 10; xxi. 10, 11, &c.; Exod. xxiii. 19; Deut. xv. 12—18; xxv. 4; xxii. 10; xx. 19. Compare Clemens Alex. Strom. ii. 18, who regards such passages as a kind of preparation for the fulness of the evangelical precepts.

following words in the book of Exodus\* justly occupy a prominent position. "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass† *going* astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and *wouldest forbear* to help him, thou shalt surely help with him."

Now such conduct would be impossible without a loving and forgiving spirit, and the entire renunciation of every desire to retaliate upon him for a real or imaginary wrong. There must be no delay on account of pressing business, or on the ground of the inconvenience, or of the difficulties, in which it might involve the traveller, or from fear of being exposed to fresh insult, or contumely, in going to the house of an enemy. There must be no hesitation or demur, but an immediate effort, if he were present, to help him out of his trouble.

And wherefore? It is the command of the God of Israel. "You will not benefit him more than yourself. He will recover his property, but you will exhibit the greatest and most precious thing in nature, noble conduct, or generosity.‡ From this, too, as surely as a shadow follows any substance, dissolution of enmity will ensue. For he who receives such a favor will be led, even

\* Exodus xxiii. 4, 5. An ancient Greek apophthegm directed men to act towards friends, as if they might one day be alienated, and *towards enemies*, as if they might finally be reconciled. Philo de Carit. § 21.

† "Or any other beast." Sam. (Boothroyd.)

‡ καλοκάγαθία, de Carit. § 15. Clement of Alexandria, Strom. ii. 18, 90, evidently had this passage in view.

against his will, because overcome by kindness, to treat with his adversary; and he who confers it must be already disposed to reconciliation under the influence of his own good deed."\* Thus we see, how Moses "aims above all things to produce that harmony of feeling, good fellowship, and unanimity, through which alone families, and cities, nations and countries, or, in a word, the whole human race may attain to the highest degree of happiness possible to man."

Such is the commentary of the philosophical Jew of Alexandria. Can the Christian moralist write better, or more accurately express the spirit of his Master's legislation? To claim originality for that is indeed an egregious blunder, most dishonouring to the Eternal Spirit of Jehovah; but Gibbon's sneers† involve this absurd misconception. But Philo elsewhere represents his countrymen denying that they had any pleasure in the sufferings inflicted by divine vengeance upon their enemy, because they were instructed by their sacred laws to cherish *feelings of humanity*,‡ whilst they blessed the Lord for showing them pity and compassion, and thus alleviating their continuous afflictions. Job denied, in like manner, that he ever rejoiced at the destruction of one that hated him, or at any evil which befel him, or that he ever suffered his mouth to sin

\* Or work of love, and offer of reconciliation and peace. Philo Quæst in Exod. l. iii. § 11.

† On chap. vii. 12.

‡ ἀνθρωποπαθεῖν in Flacc. § 14.



by wishing a curse to his soul;\* for the Spirit, which directed him, had anticipated that apostolic precept, "bless and curse not,"† which the professors, denounced by St. James,‡ so fearfully neglected, and had engraven it upon his heart.

It is very remarkable, that, in the passage of the epistle to the Romans,§ which has sometimes been contrasted with the Mosaic law on the subject, because it forbids revenge, the apostle enforces his injunction by special references to the words of Deuteronomy, and to one of the most striking proverbs of Solomon, without any allusion to any new or peculiar precept of the Lord Jesus.

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord: *therefore*, (repeating the preceding exhortation,) give place unto wrath," even of that Avenger; as David did, when he exclaimed, "the Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee."¶ And again, "if thine

\* Job xxxi. 29, 30.

† Rom. xii. 14.

‡ James iii. 8—12.

§ Rom. xii. 19—21; cited above p. 93.

|| Deut. xxxii. 35.

¶ 1 Sam. xxiv. 12. The Psalmist testifies that he had delivered him, that without any cause was his enemy. Psalm vii. 4. Compare 1 Sam. xxvi. He also declares that when the wicked, who afterwards rejoiced in his adversity, were lying sick, he humbled his soul with fasting and sackcloth, praying earnestly for them, and behaved himself as if they had been friends and brothers, or even as one that mourneth for his mother. Psalm xxxv. 13, 14.

enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head; and the Lord shall reward thee." The apostle omits the last clause of this precept, subjoining, as the interpretation of the metaphor, "be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." For the proverb is evidently a mere extension of the Mosaic precept, already cited, or rather another illustration of the spirit of love, enjoined by the law.

Chrysostom, indeed, not understanding the metaphor, which seems to refer to the art of smelting, strangely supposed, that the apostle uses the argument of the proverb in order to allure *the weak*, (for whose benefit fraud and deceit might be employed, according to the impious notions of the Nicene age,)\* as a bait is used by anglers. As if after engaging in acts of benevolence to their enemies with the hope of causing them suffering, they would gradually learn to abandon the desire of revenge, in the actual indulgence of such refined malice.† Augustine saw more clearly that this detestable feeling, which in his day many justified by reference to the proverb, was essentially wrong, and utterly inconsistent

\* Romans iii. 8, was sadly forgotten; and the maxims of Plato, Philo, and Maximus of Tyre, were adopted by the infatuated doctors of the church. See Neander *Gesch. der Christl. kirche*. T. i. p. 86, 87, &c.

† T. v. p. 220; 232, 233; T. iii. p. 463, and see T. iv. p. 367—369.

with the scope of the passage; he supposes that the coals of fire heaped upon the head are the image of a pain "inflicted in love, and for the burning out of the malice in the man, a present smart, which is to issue in a lasting cure."\* It may be that some stubborn ores prove intractable, and that all the labour spent upon them will be expended in vain. Some hard and stubborn men, in like manner, may withstand every overture of peace, and persist in their enmity, in defiance of our loving acts; but these will be exceptional and rare cases, not affecting the general rule, and the ordinary result.

Saul confessed with tears that David had acted in a *Christian* spirit. "Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. And thou hast showed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day."† And again, "blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail."‡

Even the Levitical precept is very distinct. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou

\* Trench p. 241, 242.

† 1 Sam. xxiv. 17—19.

‡ 1 Sam. xxvi. 25.

shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, *but* (for such is the context leading up to the second great or fundamental commandment of the law already cited,) thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.”\* Now the manner, in which the Lord unfolds the duty of his disciples, seems to be a new, strongly parabolical, illustration of that temper of mind, or of that meekness and patience under injuries, which is most opposed to the desire of retaliation, or to the cherished recollection, with bitter feelings of resentment, of any wrong that we have endured,† and which is the genuine fulfilment of the law, “because it works no ill to a neighbour.” He, therefore, requires us to yield *to the evil man*,‡ and not to *resist* him: for, as Chrysostom says, we shall overcome, not by contending with him, but by yielding; as we extinguish fire by water, and not by the accumulation of fire. Thus Isaac yielded to the encroachments of the servants of Abimelech; and David meekly committed himself to Him that judgeth right-

\* Levit. xix. 17, 18. Tertullian adv. Marc l. i. c. 23, forgot this when he said, quo magis proximum diligas, diligere juberis inimicum et extraneum (sc. a Christo.) Exaggeratio est debitæ bonitatis, exactio indebitæ.

† This *μνησικακία* Chrysostom calls the worst and most inexcusable of sins. T. i. p. 928, 929.

‡ The original is *τῷ πονήρῳ*. Chrysostom refers this to Satan, because the injurious man is instigated by him! T. vii. 183. The apostle says, “being persecuted, we suffer it.” 1 Cor. iv. 12.

eously,\* instead of "resisting evil," when Shimei cursed him. Thus even heathens, with no promise to cheer them, had often borne injuries and false accusations without resistance, and had even done good to those, who plotted against them.† Patience under persecutions would be especially necessary to set forth the reality of Christian principle, and the certainty of its animating hopes in a better world; for all "that take the sword shall perish by the sword;"‡ but the wrath of man§ must be subordinate to the overruling power of a faithful Creator,|| who will restrain it, or convert it into a blessing, or turn it to good will, as "may seem best to His godly wisdom;" so that by attempting to anticipate His time, or to modify His purpose, we shall only aggravate our trial. The history of religious wars, in defence of Protestantism, affords a painful illustration of the importance of compliance with the divine precept. How striking is the contrast in this respect between the lion-hearted Luther and the martial Zuinglius!¶

Paul, however, remonstrated, when unjustly and illegally bound; he claimed the privilege of a Roman citizen; he refused to be thrust secretly out of the jail

\* 2 Sam. xvi. 5—13, with 1 Peter ii. 23.

† Chrysost. T. vi. p. 825; T. viii. p. 202.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 52.

§ See Psalm lxxvi. 10.

|| 1 Peter iv. 19.

¶ But surely the Christian would not err, if like Moses he espoused the cause of the oppressed, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies? Exod. ii. 16, 17.

at Philippi; he informed Lysias of the conspiracy which endangered his life, and appealed to Cæsar, when inferior rulers trifled with his cause.\* There must be a point, beyond which passive submission could not be pressed without impropriety and sin. "Christian love and prudence are in each case to decide whether" this, which must always be obeyed in the spirit, as the law of love, "is also a precept for the outward conduct." If silence would confirm a man in his sin, it cannot be so; for in such cases love may be shown more distinctly in resistance than in submission.†

The Lord, indeed, himself best illustrated the meaning of his own precept; for, when struck by an officer of the High Priest, he did not fulfil it literally, but calmly replied, "if I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if not, why smitest thou me?"‡ For the inspired proverb§ testifies, that "a soft answer turneth away wrath."

The two following rules similarly refer to the for-

\* Acts xxii. 25—29; xvi. 35—39; xxiii. 12—21; xxv. 9—11; 21; xxvi. 31, 32; xxviii. 19.

† Trench p. 226—229.

‡ John xviii. 22, 23. See above p. 31. In the apocryphal book of Wisdom, it is written, "let us examine him, (the righteous) with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his meekness and prove his patience; let us condemn him with a shameful death; for by his own saying he shall be respected." (ii. 19, 20.) St. James probably refers to this. (v. 6.) "Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you."

§ Prov. xv. 1. The apostle (Acts xxiii. 2, 3,) seems to have erred in retorting an unjust blow by invective.

bearance and patience, which we should invariably exhibit, when called to endure personal wrong. If rather than resent a blow, we are to expose ourselves cheerfully to a second, so also, if a law suit be brought against us to deprive us of a portion of our property, *rather than retaliate*, we should submit to the voluntary surrender of the whole. "The coat" and "the cloak" constituted the whole of the ordinary dress of the Orientalist. The latter is described as an oblong piece of cloth, square at the corners, in form like the plaid of the Highlanders, usually thrown loosely round the person, and should be called "a mantle."\* The former was an inner garment, a linen shirt or tunic, covering the whole body, and girt about the loins by persons engaged in work, when the other was commonly laid aside.† The loss of this was evidently of more consequence than that of the other. If a poor man pledged it, the law required the creditor to deliver it to him again before sunset, that he might sleep in his raiment and bless him.‡ For a Jew, therefore, to go to law to obtain such an article would have been literally impossible; the thought suggested is manifestly that of a most cruel and oppressive proceeding, under the cloak of legal forms. Let not even such an act provoke you to retaliate, or to revenge yourselves; as before

\* Campbell Prel. Diss. p. 298.

† See John xxi. 7. One thus attired was called "naked" by a familiar idiom.

‡ Deut. xxiv. 12, 13.

you placed your person, so now place your whole property at the mercy of your antagonist; or, as the Hebrew Christians literally did, *joyfully* submit to "the spoiling of your goods,"\* in the assured prospect of a heavenly inheritance.

And again, if *pressed* to go a certain journey, instead of insisting upon our rights, and pleading the privilege of exemption, if we have it, in an angry and bitter spirit, let us yield without hesitation, and that cheerfully, as one that *would be ready* to do twice as much as was actually required. For here also a literal application of the proverbial rule would obviously involve an absurdity. The allusion is to the peculiar law of the East, or to a customary tribute, which was imposed upon the Jews by the Persians, and maintained by the Syrian kings, by which the appointed officers might compel any man, except perhaps the students of the law, to provide beasts of burden and carriages, or to fulfil a certain task in the public service.† Thus we find, that, when Jesus was led away to be crucified, and was apparently unable to bear the weight of his cross, they *compelled* Simon of Cyrene to bear it after him, as they met him *coming out of the country*, perhaps

\* Heb. x. 34.

† Josephus alleges a letter of king Demetrius to Jonathan the High Priest, and to the Jewish people, exempting their beasts of burden from this liability. Antiq. xiii. 2, 3. The same is referred to in 1 Macc. x. 25, &c. (B.C. 153.)



at the gate of Jerusalem, and thus prevented his going home, or accomplishing his intention. The word, by which this act of compulsion is expressed,\* is the same peculiar word of Persian origin, which occurs in the passage before us,† and thus most strikingly explains the meaning of our Lord. An illustration of the spirit, which He inculcates, may happily be drawn from His own conduct in the case of the tribute money. He was really exempt from any such payment; but rather than offend, or put a snare in the way of those who demanded it, he provided for the payment by a miracle.‡ How many illusions would the remembrance of this practically dispel; and how many supposed Martyrs would lose their name and their mask together!

But if we have sufficiently shown that the Christian precept is no new thing, the question recurs as to those Mosaic precepts, to which the Lord was thought to allude; are they binding or not? One point, at least, must be now conceded, that they are not more inconsistent with the New, than with the Old, Testament; and that consequently to apply them to our personal relations, as individuals, one with another, would be a very gross perversion, in either case. But we may

\* Matt. xxvii. 32; Mark xv. 21.

† Observe the omission of any allusion to this in Luke vi. 29, 30; perhaps because it would have been unintelligible to ordinary readers amongst the Gentiles.

‡ Matt. xvii. 24—27.

seek justice and personal security; and we must recognise public spirit, and the exercise of magisterial authority, as by no means inconsistent with the most meek and loving disposition.

We have already referred to the example of St. Paul; we have yet a higher one to adduce. The Son of Man Himself deliberately made a scourge of small cords, and then proceeded, with such violence as befitted Him and the occasion, to cast out the salesmen and money changers, who profaned the temple of God; and the evangelist ascribes this act to his zeal for His Father's house.\* But the magistrate is "the minister of God to the church for good," to shield it from injustice, oppression, and violence, that the evil man may neither smite us, nor sue us at law, nor press us unduly; and as "a minister to execute wrath upon evil doers, he beareth not *the sword*† in vain." Zeal for the holiness of God, and for the suppression of daring vice, should habitually animate him. It is true, then, that the law, perverted to justify personal malice by the Scribes, was prescribed by Moses for the regulation of the Jewish magistrates, and in its original purport remains untouched by the language

\* John ii. 13—17. Observe, in this second instance, how the beloved disciple raises us above the letter to the spirit. It is his special office to unfold the deeper meaning, which lay perhaps elsewhere wrapt in symbols only.

† Not a mere ensign of office, but the actual instrument of execution in that age.

of Jesus.\* The judicial laws of any country, whatever they may be, (for those of the Jews cannot bind us in the letter, however suggestive in the spirit of what would even now be conducive to social happiness,) must be executed impartially upon criminals; for nothing in the words before us can limit the explicit assertions of the apostle.† Wrath and revenge may be executed by magistrates; because it is their office to do so; and therefore it is right to appeal to them in the cause of God and truth, or of righteousness and love.‡

We tremble, indeed, as we read the awful histories of Elymas, and of Ananias and of Sapphira, especially when we see the latter struck down in the midst of their sins, without opportunity of repentance, or hope of mercy, and that by *the word* of the apostle. But such records clearly show how unwarrantable the assertion is, that capital punishments must always be wrong, and that the magistrate must now sheath his sword, under all circumstances, on the mere ground of the Christian principles here inculcated. Misplaced

\* The avenger of blood was *permitted* to slay the homicide; but this was a civil institution, designed to regulate and restrain the characteristic spirit of rude people, and cannot be extended beyond the letter, or interpreted in contradiction to the spirit of the moral law. On this point we must call to mind the distinction, intimated in the introduction, between the standard and the actual attainment of Israel, or the permission and the will of God.

† Rom. xiii. 1—7.

‡ Erastus, the *chamberlain* of the city of Corinth, was a Christian. Rom. xvi. 23.

mercy to the guilty few is often the height of cruelty to the many. It is the fruit of false sentiment and of mawkish feeling, rather than of expansive love and far-seeing wisdom.

A fourth rule is added by the Lord. "Give to him that asketh thee." Benevolence must crown patience; and if it be the cherished principle of our hearts, it will indispose us to contend angrily for our rights. The provision of the law on this point is free from all ambiguity. "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that he wanteth."\* The benevolence of Job is proverbial.† Many injunctions bearing upon the subject are enforced in the glowing promises of Isaiah, addressed to such as similarly feel for the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted.‡ *Philanthropy* is the mind and law of our God, exhibited under every dispensation, enforced in a thousand precepts, and personified as it were in Him, who declared that it was "more blessed

\* Deut. xv. 7, 8, and see ib. ver. 11; xxiv. 10—15; 19—21. *Præceptum largitionis in egenos ubique diffusum sit in lege et prophetis.* Tertull. adv. Marc l. iv. c. 36. We thus see, as he says, the truth of Matt. v. 17, in this also.

† See above on ver. 7, p. 42.

‡ Isaiah lviii. 10, 11.

to give than to receive,"\* and who has never turned one suppliant empty away from His throne of grace; but who writes on the hearts of those, whom He has received and blessed, by the indelible work of His own Spirit, "freely ye have received, freely give."†

"He who receives is made happy; he who gives makes happy all around." He who receives has the bliss of a creature; he who gives liberally participates as it were in the attributes of Jehovah.‡ And we were born, called by grace, and endowed with all that we possess, that we might render each other wiser, holier, and happier.

But this rule also necessarily has a limit. The apostle commanded that "if any would not work, neither should he eat;"§ we are not to give encouragement to the prodigal or idle; we are not under the pretence of observing the letter of a precept to avoid that *consideration* of individual cases, from which sloth and indolence deter us, but which the law of love imperatively demands. For the Psalmist says, "blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble."|| And wise and loving

\* Acts xx. 35. See a sermon on this text by Howels.

† Matt. x. 8. See Prov. xi. 24, 25; Luke xvi. 9—12; 1 Tim. vi. 17—19, &c.

‡ "We never do anything more closely resembling the acts of God than when we distribute to others." *Philo de Judic.* chap. v.

§ 2 Thess. iii. 10.

|| Psalm xli. 1.



care is what seems most essential at the present day, that sympathy may have full play. Let the indigent be *sought out* by humble self denying Christians; let deliberate exertion be made for their relief, in that form which is really most beneficial in each case; let us redress their grievances, provide them with better dwellings, more conveniences, and a larger supply of pure water, and above all teach them to help themselves, and to *educate* their own children, whilst we *instruct* them; let us not allow any to endanger their lives, or to impair their constitutions, or to corrupt their morals, in their service, and if their health is injured by their employment, let us secure to them and to their families an adequate indemnity; above all let us show, in word and in deed, that we regard them as brethren, and ourselves as stewards for the common good.\*

### § 6.

*“ Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun*

\* See on chap. vi. 1—4. Our all is lent to us, and may be recalled at will. The use only is ours, and that not for self exaltation, but for God, and therefore not to be *concealed*. Philo Quis Rer. Div. Her. § 21, 22; de Cerub. § 31, 33. God alone can truly say,—it is mine! Leg. Alleg. l. iii. § 70.

*to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye moré than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."* (v. 43—48.)

We have already seen that Moses neither enjoins, nor permits, us to hate an enemy.\* Such an interpretation, however, might perhaps have been plausibly put upon one or two passages in the book of Deuteronomy; but it is plainly inconsistent with the force of the term *neighbour*, as expounded by the Lord in the parable of the good Samaritan. A prevailing feud prevented all friendly intercourse between his countrymen and the Jews, and frequently excited the bitterest feelings of rancorous hatred; but they were neighbours; and whenever the grace of God operated upon the hearts of individuals, kindly offices were freely interchanged, and love knit them together in holy fellowship.

*Nationally*, indeed, certain restrictions were necessary under a dispensation of races; and a people in the enjoyment of hereditary privileges could not consistently open them out to hereditary enemies. The Jews were to "dwell alone, and not be reckoned amongst the

\* Trench, p. 237, contends that this is the spirit of the Old Testament, and regards it as a poor evasion to say that the exact words are not found there!

nations;" and they were, therefore, debarred from that dangerous affinity with idolaters, which would have tended, through their characteristic weakness and vacillation of purpose, to the corruption of their faith, and to the degradation of their morals. But, *individually*,\* the door was open to every inquiring proselyte; and the beautiful story of Ruth, who belonged to a tribe the most hostile to Israel, shows that a loving welcome awaited even a Moabite.

The Psalmist, indeed, hated the enemies of God with a perfect hatred;† and Nehemiah pronounced a solemn imprecation upon those who scoffed at the work, in which he was engaged, of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and in the bitter enmity of their hearts laboured to hinder it by violence or fraud.‡ Can, then, such facts as these be reconciled to the evangelical standard? We believe it.

It may be useful, at a time of so much cavilling and superficial comment as the present, to call more particular attention to a notable passage in the book of Proverbs. We there read, not without some feeling of astonishment, in one line, "answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him," and then in the subsequent one, "answer a fool ac-

\* And throughout the Lord is laying down rules for individuals. A Jew might have said the Edomite is not my neighbour; but that error was not the one here in view. The law, however, is plain. Deut. xxiv. 7. "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother."

† Psalm cxxxix. 21, 22.

‡ Nehem. iv. 4, 5, &c.



according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.”\* This juxta position of two apparently inconsistent and contradictory precepts seems to be designed by special love and wisdom, to illustrate more forcibly the necessity of caution in the interpretation of Scripture, and to intimate the possibility of exhibiting in a clear light that admirable harmony and unity of design, which really pervades the whole volume of inspiration, though not recognised without attentive study, and thoughtful examination. It is apparent at a glance, that Solomon cannot intend to contradict and refute himself in this paradoxical passage; why then should we suppose that Paul and James are at variance, because their words, read superficially, seem to be contradictory? or why should we hastily determine, that this and the other portion of the divine word are in decided contrast, as belonging to different dispensations and moral codes, because the clue to their reconciliation is not immediately obvious? The precious vein of truth, though one in its origin, and uniform in its essential characteristics, as it traverses the strata of our earth, may perhaps be interrupted by an unexpected fault. But let us work on; the interruption is temporary and extrinsical, designed to stimulate that habit of research, which is its own best recompense; we shall meet with the vein at another level, at another point, where alone it can be profitably worked. Here, however, in the book of

\* Prov. xxvi. 4, 5.

Proverbs, we have, as it were, two parallel veins of seemingly heterogeneous matter, inclosing a thread of silver; and if we simply pursue either the one or the other, we shall altogether miss the prize; for there are cases in which fools are to be answered according to their folly, and there are certain fools, who must never be so answered. The railer, the scoffer, the unscrupulous partisan must never be met with their own weapons; for if we attempted to do that, we should become like them. Passion must be repelled with meekness; abuse by silence; artful misrepresentations by simplicity of wisdom; and hasty supercilious ignorance by unostentatious learning. But when fools distracted the church of Corinth by lofty assumptions, and the claim of superior distinction, the apostle tells them that he also would boast himself a little, "seeing they suffered fools gladly;" and therefore speaks foolishly for a time, as one that gloried in the flesh, that in this assumed character he might the better unmask them, and show the vanity of their pretensions.\*

In this way we may, perhaps, see more clearly, how inaccurate and false the most specious conclusions may be, which are merely derived from isolated passages, and how dangerous is the practice of straining parables, and of pressing a general rule to the very utmost, without reference to parallel or contrasted passages, and exceptional cases, from the combination of which

\* 2 Cor. xi. 16—29; xii. 11.

alone the whole truth can be evolved, and the *partial modification* of a *general maxim* be disclosed.

1. The *general maxim*, (for instance,) enunciated by the Lord, in the passage more immediately under consideration, is love to personal enemies. This involves the consequent renunciation of every bitter feeling, and the habit of special prayer for them; and the actings of benevolence towards them, with an earnest desire for their welfare. Chrysostom\* has already traced the various steps of the climax, by which the disciple is here gradually led to this height of perfection. First, do no evil; then, do not retaliate; be quiet under injuries; yield patiently; nay, give more than is demanded; then do not hate, but love your enemy; do him good, yea, *pray for him!* Or, in the words of Moses, already quoted, do not hate, but *love your neighbour as yourself*; and then it follows, that you will do him good, (as distinctly commanded,) whenever the opportunity occurs, and at all times wish him well, and therefore in your devotions pray for him, (if it be possible,) as for yourself! It seems, then, to be clearly proved that the most beautiful and sublime precept of the Gospel is no new thing; and we therefore feel no surprise at the assertion of the Jewish rabbi in the East, who told Mr. Jowett that he also habitually inculcated it.

But it is one thing to admire and to teach, and

\* T. vii. p. 186, 187.

another heartily and habitually to obey. *Nature* has no power to rise to such an elevation above the storms and perturbations of an evil world; the Jew was denounced by the heathen Tacitus for his settled hatred for aliens;\* his history, as recorded in the Scriptures, and as related by secular writers, painfully attests his guiltiness in this respect, and his prevailing want of love, even to those who had the greatest claims upon his affections; but Jesus Christ has illustrated His word by His own glorious example.

“Love your enemies:”—for “God commended his love toward us, in that whilst we were yet sinners,—alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works,—Christ died for us.” And “bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you;”—for this was the constant aim of His holy life, as He “went about doing good,” and “calling sinners to repentance.” And “pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;”—for in that hour, when He hung upon the cross, betrayed, denied, forsaken by His friends, surrounded by an infuriated multitude, numbered with transgressors, reviled by men, assailed by the hosts of hell, deserted by the Father, suffering as a man excruciating agonies, bearing as our Mediator the curse of a holy law, and the whole penalty of sin, He Himself meekly and lovingly exclaimed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not

\* Hist. l. v. But this was in opposition to the precept. Deut. x. 18, 19.

what they do!"\* It is not, forgive one, or two, or some of them, but in general "forgive them:" for they all alike needed forgiveness; and as a perfect man, Jesus could make no distinction amongst them, though "as God He knew those that were His." As, therefore, His love was ever wider than the enmity which may have pursued Him; his prayer comprehends them all. Nor when raised from the dead, did Jesus forbear the exercise of compassion. "Repentance and forgiveness of sins must be preached amongst all nations;" but not until Jerusalem had first fully heard these glorious tidings.†

Alas! how great are our shortcomings; how fearfully we lose sight of this wonderful example of unwearied love. How apt we are to aggravate the wrong which we have experienced, and the feeling which prompted it; and how impatiently we listen to the pleas, which kinder spirits earnestly allege. But when Stephen† fell amidst the shower of stones, so madly hurled against him, he knelt down, and cried *with a loud voice*, the more clearly to show the triumph of his God-sustained spirit, in the hour of bodily weakness and exhaustion, "Lord lay not this sin to their charge;" and with these words on his lips, he sweetly fell asleep, still

\* Luke xxiii. 34. † Luke xxiv. 47. See Psalm lxxviii. 18.

† But contrast the severity with which he had upbraided his countrymen for their obstinate rebellion against the Holy Ghost, their uncircumcised hearts and ears, and their persecution of the saints. Acts vii. 51—53.

breathing love, in the bosom of his adorable Redeemer.\* We must applaud; but can we not seek grace to emulate such an example?

Campbell strikingly remarks a peculiar characteristic of the Evangelists.† They conciliate our esteem and love to the people of God, but direct our hatred and contempt against the crimes and vices, not against the persons, of evil men, and never either abuse or revile, or make unkind comments, or utter a word of invective against any of the enemies of Christ. None of these are even named without special cause. But why is this? They had drunk into the spirit of their Master, delighting with the love of complacency in His friends, and regarding with benevolence, forbearance, and pity His most implacable foes. For it is obvious that the love, which the Christian bears to an enemy or to a wicked man, is not exactly identical with that communion of spirit, which knits him to his brethren in Christ. The test, also, by which, as Jesus and the beloved disciple intimate, the Christian may try his own assurance, that he has really passed from death unto life, and the sure mark, by which even the world may know us to be His, is not our charity to our enemies, but our brotherly kindness one towards another,‡ as that is measured and enforced by His love to us, which is necessarily a new and personal standard.

Moreover, the Lord does not here point to his own

\* Acts vii. 60.

† Prel. Diss. p. 73.

‡ John xiii. 34, 35; xv. 12; 17; 1 John iii. 14, &c.

approaching suffering, or to that love of the Father, which sent Him forth "to be the propitiation for our sins," but to His ordinary Providence, as the God of nature, by which He bears witness of Himself to all men alike everywhere,\* as a common Father of all. Our daily experience of this divine bounty ought to impress our minds with a deep sense of our mutual obligations to each other. Conformity to the mind and image of God will evidence our sonship; a loving child can aim at nothing nobler; and it is essential to true godliness. Chrysostom, indeed, repeatedly quotes† the passage, as if it was written, "that ye may be *like* your Father;" because this is necessarily implied. This, indeed, was the end to which even heathen philosophers have taught men to aspire;‡ and to which Christ promises to exalt his saints. We should probably infer, that love to enemies is a precept, which the mere light of natural reason would suffice to establish, though not certainly to give power to obey. Moses had already enforced the obligation to show benevolence to strangers, by reminding the Israelites of God's Providential care over them.§

The world often asks with a contemptuous sneer, what is the Christian doing more than other men; or

\* Acts xiv. 17; Psalm xix.

† T. vii. p. 187; T. viii. p. 308, &c.

‡ See Seneca de Benef; Plato Theæt. § 84, 85, p. 176.

§ Deut. x. 18, "in giving them food and raiment." Cf. Acts xiv. 17; xvii. 25.

what is the end of all his services, prayers, and professions? See what answer our conduct ought to give to such inquiries. The most guilty of mankind may love and salute, not with outward courtesy, but with the inward feeling, of which that is the conventional sign, those who in like manner love and salute them; we must do more than they, if we would glorify our God; for we must live a life of continuous love and benevolence to friend and foe.

Mark, too, the present allusions to *the publicans*, as if the worst of mankind;\* and this the rather, because the evangelist whose record we are reading, was himself a publican; and in the parallel passage of Luke we find *sinners*!† The Scribes and Pharisees thoroughly despised the former; but if *they* had no love to enemies, their boasted superiority was an illusion; and the disciples were called to a higher standard of righteousness than even those professed. It is to be "perfect even as their Heavenly Father;" that is, not to be content simply to avoid evil, but ever to labour to benefit their fellow men, as those who might in degree still be defective, but not in kind; because actually possessing every grace, or every lineament of the divine image, however feebly developed.‡

\* Chrysost. T. vii. p. 539. Cf. xxi. 31, &c.

† Luke vi. 33. There is no parallel to Matt. xviii. 18; another characteristic *record*. Here the better reading in ver. 47 is "the heathen."

‡ Compare Trench p. 244, 245; and see above p. 2 and p. 50.—In the parallel passage, Luke vi. 31, the word is "merciful." God is



Low expectations are alike discouraging in themselves and dishonouring to God. There is a holy ambition which enables men to do great things, and which will never suffer them to rest in what they have acquired, under an abiding consciousness that God is both able and willing to give more and more. Let us, therefore, continue striving and pressing forward\* with manly energy, as those who are predestined to be conformed at last to the glorious image of His Son, in spotless purity; and who now feel assured that, as "God is love," His children should dwell, and walk in love continually, ever "desiring to do good by hand, by counsel, by any comfort within their reach to all alike,—in a sweet, diffusive, bountiful spirit of godlike benignity."†

2. The *partial* modification of this general maxim, in relation to which mistake is impossible, may be seen

good to all, (Psalm cxlv. 9,) *without respect of persons*, (Rom. ii. 11; Acts x. 34; 1 Peter i. 17;) exhibiting to *good and evil* "the riches of His goodness, and forbearance and longsuffering." (Rom. ii. 4.) This is that *perfect* love or benevolence, which we are to imitate. Every work of art is executed as it were by piecemeal; every product of nature has the rudiments of all its parts *created* simultaneously, so that they have only to grow and develop themselves in their due proportions and appointed beauties. This happily illustrates the distinction between true and artificial religion, or the nature of the work of the Spirit and the vain efforts of man. In the one case there is created at once conformity to the divine image in all particulars; in the other, there is an incongruous admixture of allowed evil, and of ostentatious good, in ever varying proportions.

\* See Phil. iii. 12—14.

† See Leighton.

in the passages already quoted from Nehemiah and the Psalmist, and in similar Scriptures, in which imprecations seem to be uttered rather than prayers, and feelings of irritation rather than of love are usually traced. These, however, are probably to be regarded as prophecies,\* or as general announcements of the divine wrath upon hardened rebels, enemies of Jehovah, and on that account alone our enemies; men, who have rejected all offers of mercy, and who only oppose us, because they see us engaged in His work. For, as the long-suffering, which they have all experienced, must sooner or later be exhausted, the days of Noah and of Lot, of David and of the Son of Man, must alike be signalled by judgment;† and we therefore find parallels to such passages in the New Testament itself. It is, indeed, the lively sense of “the terror of the Lord,” and of “the wrath to come” there revealed, in the execution of which the children of God must not only acquiesce,‡ but also participate, which now constrains the ministers of reconciliation the more earnestly to *persuade men*§ to repent, and to flee unto a Saviour, “while He may be found.”

Whatever love we may cherish to our personal

\* This is certainly the case with respect to Psalm lxi. and cix., (which relates to Judas. Acts i. 20.) Some have similarly interpreted Acts xxiii. 3.

† Matt. xxiv. 37—39; xxiii. 32—36; Luke xi. 47—51; xvii. 26—30, &c.

‡ Psalm cxlix.; Rev. ii. 26, 27.

§ 2 Cor. v. 11.

enemies, we dare not love their sins;\* and we know who has required us, as an essential test of our discipleship, to *hate* our nearest relatives,† or to act as if we hated them, whenever affection to them would clash with the calls of duty, and their influence, if not resisted, would necessarily lead to the neglect of heavenly realities.‡ There must, therefore, be a holy abhorrence of the enemies of God,§ and perhaps even the execution, under certain circumstances, of His judgments upon them;|| but, at any rate, there must be a hearty concurrence in the loving *severity*,¶ which may at once arrest the progress of corruption, arouse sinners to repentance, and preserve the saints in the path of holiness. For an inspired Proverb testifies, that “the wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.”\*\*

When Jesus exhorted the disciples to persevering prayer by the experience of the oppressed widow, He evidently represented her circumstances and suit as

\* Clemens A. Strom. iv. 13, 95.

† Luke xiv. 26. *Hate* is used in a comparative sense; see the parallel, Matt. x. 37.

‡ “Fleshly intercourse must then be dissolved by spiritual enmity.” Clemens A. de Div. Serv. § 23. Nothing must be preferred to the claims of duty, (or, to what is just,) not even children or life itself. Plato Criton. § 15; cited by Eusebius Præp. Evang. l. xiii. c. 9.

§ See 2 John 10, 11. The angel of the church in Ephesus is commended, because he could not bear the evil. Rev. ii. 2.

|| Above p. 166.

¶ See Rom. xi. 22.

\*\* Prov. xxi. 18. Compare Isaiah xliii. 3, 4.

symbolical of those of His Elect; for He declared in the application of the parable, that He will *avenge* them speedily.\* In the Apocalypse, indeed, the souls under the altar expressly cry, "how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"† Alas! the kingdom of God cannot be manifested in its glory, until the kingdom of sin is utterly overthrown, and His enemies "trodden in the winepress of His wrath."‡

Moreover, the apostle says to Timothy, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works; of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words."§ But this he said, not speaking of himself, but in the power of the Spirit, not expressing any feeling of personal malice, but the language of love; desirous not of the ruin of the individual, but of the preservation, (as it

\* Luke xviii. 1—8.

† Rev. vi. 9, 10. See Trench p. 240; and above p. 146.

‡ See Isaiah lxiii. 1—6; Rev. xiv. 17—20; Luke xix. 27.

§ 2 Tim. iv. 14, 15. Macknight observes that the Alexandrian and six other MSS., with the Syriac, and Vulgate, and some of the Fathers, read here, "the Lord will reward him;" but (as I think) he justly supposes that "the ancient transcribers and translators thought it more agreeable to the apostle's character, to *foretell*, than to *wish evil* to this wicked teacher," and, therefore, altered the text. Boothroyd follows their reading, which is also edited by Scholz.

It has been frequently remarked, that similar passages in the Psalms would be more accurately rendered in the future than in the imperative.

were, *the ransom*,) of those whom he was deceiving and destroying; or, seeking the security of the whole body by the amputation of a diseased member.\*

Neither here, then, nor under the former head,† can we discover any real contrast.‡ The Lord enforces the spirit which breathed in His own unadulterated word, in opposition to the current misapprehension of public teachers, who failed to distinguish between personal and official acts or feelings. This is that spirit of holy love, which at once constrains us to hate evil, and to do all the good in our power, whether conciliating by patient forbearance, or actively restraining a wicked man from wronging those we love.

\* See Gal. v. 12.

† It should have been previously noted, that Valerius Maximus devotes a chapter (*læto stilo*. l. iv. c. 2.) to the fame of illustrious Romans, who had been reconciled to their enemies, or acted kindly towards them. See p. 160.

‡ We are not bound to justify every recorded act of the saints of the Old Testament, any more than that of Paul, alluded to above p. 161, (note §), which seems parallel to some cavilled at. But David's charge to Solomon with respect to Shimei (1 Kings ii. 8, 9.) cannot be regarded, (even if we reject Kennicott's rendering,) as an act of personal revenge, but only as a warning against a dangerous character, and a political charge. Observe that Solomon's kingdom (*ib. vers. 45, 46.*) was established by his death.

## PART II. § 7.

2. Having thus established the true standard of righteousness, in opposition to the false views of the Scribes and Pharisees, and enforced the law of love to man, the Lord here proceeds to denounce the false spirit, in which they performed their favourite religious duties of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, and to explain the only mode, in which such acts could be acceptably accomplished in the sight of an heart-searching God, who "will be sanctified in all that come nigh unto Him, and glorified in them before all the people,"\* and requires "truth in the inner parts."†

The Levitical law not only prohibited the use of leaven, but also of honey, in all burnt offerings presented unto Jehovah;‡ thus implying that those whose hearts are cleansed from malice and wickedness,§ must also renounce all ostentation, proud self complacency, and vainglorious desire of human applause; that whatever we do, and therefore, above all, whatever we do in the professed service of God may be habitually done with a single eye to His glory.|| For, as the inspired Proverb testifies, "it is not good to eat much honey; so for men to search their own glory is not glory,"¶ but vanity and delusion.

\* See Levit. x. 3.

† Psalm li. 6.

‡ Levit. ii. 11.

§ See 1 Cor. v. 8; and above p. 122.

|| 1 Cor. x. 31.

¶ Prov. xxv. 27.

By strict conformity to the law, in all particulars, Jesus Christ Himself was qualified to become the great Captain of our salvation. For, as "He knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,"\* so he neither sought His own pleasure, nor His own glory. His great object was the entire fulfilment of the divine will, and the manifestation of the Father's glory, by the completion of His appointed work. It was the same in his measure with the great apostle of the Gentiles. He exercised himself continually to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and man; and though sparing no exertion to conciliate men, this was not for his own sake, or to please them, but as a means of winning them to Christ, and of glorifying Him.† But although the Scribes and Pharisees (in general) were really most unrighteous, they eagerly grasped at the honour, which man could bestow, in reckless disregard of that which proceedeth from God only, and were thus incapable alike of serving Christ, and of believing in His Name.‡ Works performed "with eye service, as by men pleasers, and not in singleness of heart," as unto God,§ even when right in themselves, must be altogether unavailing and worthless; but these men habitually perverted their religious observances

\* 1 Peter ii. 22.

† See 1 Cor. x. 33, with Gal. i. 10, as explained by Augustine. Trench p. 249.

‡ John v. 44.

§ Coloss. iii. 22.

into occasions of self display, and this under the pretence of honouring Jehovah; so that they necessarily became provocative of His heaviest displeasure.\*

And yet their error is one to which human nature is ever peculiarly prone. A certain regard to self is not only lawful, but necessary. We must take diligent heed to ourselves; we must seek the salvation of our own souls; we may long for that inheritance of "praise and honour and glory," which is promised to them that love God. But the lusciousness of honey may tempt us to eat more than enough; self love, so proper in its measure, soon becomes inordinate; all our ideas, affections, and aspirations too often revolve in that narrow circle, and then vainglory prompts and mars all our actions. The disciples are here warned against this; and it well becomes us to be upon our guard against such a base and tyrannical and "many headed passion," as Chrysostom justly calls it, which, as "the worm destroys the wood, from which it sprung,"† fatally desecrates all those services which it stimulates.

*"Take heed that ye do not your ALMS‡ before men,*

\* For their religious acts were sanctimonious cloaks of cherished ungodliness and sin. In Luke xii. 1, hypocrisy is expressly called the leaven of the Pharisees.

† Chrysost. T. vii. p. 622; T. viii. p. 483; 150; and see ib. p. 144, 145. We cannot at once attain human and divine praise, or successfully aspire to both.

‡ The reading is here somewhat uncertain. Scholz and others retain *ἐλεημοσύνην*; but Campbell, on the authority of a few MSS., reads *δικαιοσύνην* in the sense of "religious duties," and regards the



*to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly."* (Chap. vi. 1—4.)

We have already seen that the Lord pronounces a blessing upon the merciful, and requires his disciples to distribute freely to the needy. When the apostles of the circumcision gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul, they expressly desired him to "remember the poor," which he declares that he *also* was "forward to do."\* Nor can it be said that the church at large has ever neglected the frequent exhortations of the Scriptures to the zealous discharge of this office of love. Their error has been of an opposite character. It is impossible to peruse the homilies of Chrysostom without

verse as generally introducing the subject, (vers. 2—18.) This reading, which is that of Tischendorf, would involve a reference to chap. v. 20, and confirm the view here taken of the connexion of the whole passage. The ambiguity probably arises from the fact, that both these Greek words have been adopted by different interpreters for the same Hebrew; (as in Psalm cxii. 3; and cxliii. 11: see Chrysost. T. iii. p. 360; 582) for Matthew, no doubt, originally wrote in Aramean, not Greek; and almsgiving and righteousness seem to have been confounded together at an early period.

\* Gal. ii. 10.

a shudder. It is not only that he exaggerated so grossly the excellence of one virtue, or of the shadow of a virtue, and thus deluded the rich with the vain hope of blotting out their sins, of making God their debtor, and of winning or rather purchasing an abundant entrance into his heavenly kingdom, by their alms; but that he thus induced them to maintain the poor, (whether pious or not,) in sordid idleness, and demoralising habits of impudent mendicancy, on their indiscriminate but casual bounty.\* He says, moreover, that his favourite doctrine, on which he was never weary of expatiating, was that which they constantly heard. He could not even see that the judgment, which separates the goats from the sheep, does not turn upon the simple performance of a work of righteousness, but upon the test of faith and love to Christ, which, under certain circumstances, such a work afforded! It

\* See T. i. p. 684, (you clothe Christ, when you clothe the beggar) 687, &c. His reference to Matt. xxv. are too numerous to be subjoined. It is his constant theme, "The virgins perished because they had no oil, or neglected the poor! *These sell* the required oil!" But Chrysostom mentions what he calls a great and wonderful instance of love, the subject of frequent conversation: a man gave his garment to a beggar, and then borrowed another for himself. (T. v. p. 732.) This is certainly more pleasing than the trite story of poor Sulpicius, relative to that strange fanatic, and gross impostor, Martin of Tours, who when a soldier and catechumen (according to his own story) cut his into two parts, and gave one to the beggar at the gate of Amiens, and then either dreamt that Christ appeared to him in half a coat. and eulogised his admirable servant to attendant angels, or at least published such a vainglorious dream to the world!

is true, that protests are occasionally heard against all that is done from a vainglorious desire of applause, which is denounced as the snare of the devil, and as a moth fretting a garment, or as a sweeping tempest; but if only this was excluded, the servile notion of thus meriting salvation was incessantly maintained.\* Those, who blindly listened to such teaching, might succeed at no very considerable cost to themselves in lulling their own consciences asleep, and in attaining to a false peace; but what blessing could they enjoy, where the saving name of Jesus Christ was neither loved nor known, and their souls continued altogether unenlightened and unrenewed?

The point, however, on which the Lord here dwells, is the absolute necessity of singleness of heart in all our religious duties. It is not that we are to act literally in secret, but that we are not to act for the mere sake of being seen by our fellows, and of obtaining their praise.† For, although, we ought to “let our light shine before men,” and “not bury it under a bushel,” we must never forget, that the object of this light bearing is not our own glory, or ostentatious self display, but the setting forth of the truth and glory

\* Chrysost. T. ii. p. 48; 446; 610; T. iii. p. 567; T. iv. p. 187, &c. Fasting alone could not ascend to heaven without almsgiving, its sister, or its chariot, or the wings of prayer: T. vi. p. 636. “I love it vehemently, and grieve to see it neglected.” T. vii. p. 622. He recommends testamentary bequests to the poor. T. vi. p. 890.

† Chrysostom and Augustine both call attention to this point.

of the Lord. The contrast, therefore, here lies between those who "sound a trumpet in the synagogues and in the streets," and those "whose left hand knows not what their right hand doeth." Both phrases are evidently figurative and hyperbolic;\* as we have no reason to believe that a trumpet was ever literally blown, when men distributed their alms, to announce their intention; and it is impossible for anything done by one hand to be concealed from the other. Mr. Jowett observes that the usual mode, in which consent is expressed in the East, on the conclusion of a bargain, and on every kind of friendly agreement or good understanding, is by putting the fore-finger of the right hand parallel to that of the left, and then rapidly rubbing them together, saying, "right, right," or "together, together."† Thus the language of our Lord would signify, "do not proclaim thy deeds to the world," neither "let thy heart consent to its own good thoughts with a sinful self applause;" and this is evidently his meaning. The ostentatious Pharisee had his reward, worthless as it was, in his own self complacency, and in the applause of the multitude, and (perhaps) in the influence which he thus acquired over the recipients of his bounty; but his real character will be manifested in the last day to his everlasting shame and confusion. On the other hand, the unostentatious,‡ hearty service of a loving

\* Chrysost. T. vii. p. 193, 194.

† Christian Researches in Syria, &c. p. 283.

‡ In the Nicene age, the poor were encouraged to throng the

Christian will be accepted by his God; so that "his light shall rise in obscurity, and his darkness will be as the noon day; for the Lord will guide him continually, and satisfy his soul in drought, and make fat his bones; and he shall be like a watered garden; and like a spring of water whose waters fail not;"\* and when Emmanuel sits on His throne of glory, He will openly proclaim and *recompense* every act of love performed in His Name.† For "he that has pity upon the poor," or relieves the needy, and *considers* the afflicted, in faith and love, *really* "lends unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He *pay him again*."‡

### § 8.

*"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the*

entrance of the church to receive the alms of those that entered it; in the idea that as defiled hands are cleansed by the material element of water, the hearts of the faithful might be also purified by the act of benevolence, and thus become capable of more devout and acceptable worship! It is scarcely possible to conceive a custom more at variance with the spirit of the Christian rule, or more calculated to delude and to ensnare vainglorious professors.

ἐλεημοσύνη properly signifies "pity" or "mercy," and is thought to be the root of the German *almosen*, and thence of our word "alms." We are too familiar with the ordinary degradation of the word *charity* or love.

\* Isaiah lviii. 10, 11.

† See Heb. vi. 10; 2 Cor. ix. 9, &c.; Gal. vi. 7—10.

‡ Prov. xix. 17. Chrysost. T. vii. p. 196.

*synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.” (v. 5—8.)*

Maximus of Tyre describes Socrates as spending his time in the midst of prayer; and this really should be descriptive of the Christian. Prayer, indeed, was the delight and constant resource of the Psalmist,\* nor could the most imminent danger deter Daniel from strict adherence to his regular devotions three times a day, in the midst of the important secular business, which pressed upon his attention, as the confidential minister of Darius.† The vision of Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel and prevailed, intimates the importunity of his weeping supplication, in a time of deep anxiety and distress, in the gloomy solitude of that trying night, apart from his family and servants, under a terrible apprehension of the vengeance of Esau, and also strikingly exhibits the rich blessing, which such prayer never fails to draw down upon the children of men.‡ “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,”

\* Psalm lv. 17.    † Daniel vi.    ‡ Gen. xxxii.; Hosea xii. 4.

is the gracious invitation of the Redeemer;\* though addressed, as the context shows, to those who despised and rejected Him; but the true Israelite ever enjoys the privilege of a present God, who draws near to us on every occasion, when His blessing is faithfully invoked.†

Prayer, however, must not be allowed to degenerate into a vainglorious display, such as the Pharisees made, "to be seen of men;" as under such circumstances it could never be acceptable to Jehovah. When genuine, it is an earnest "pouring out of the heart before God," the work of faith, the cry of need, the confident application of poor and empty suitors to a rich Almighty Friend, in calm reliance upon His love. The reward of the hypocrite was the empty bubble which he sought; the reward of the disciple is "mercy and grace to help in every time of need."

The language, in which the Lord lays down his present rule, is evidently parabolical, as in former instances. For not only did Daniel pray acceptably, when over-heard by his fellow men, but the one hundred and twenty first disciples publicly continued with one accord in prayer and supplication together,‡ in anxious expectation of that promise of the Spirit, which in due time was vouchsafed to them all. When, moreover,

\* Psalm lxxxi. 10, 11.

† Deut. iv. 7; James iv. 8. See below chap. vi. on Matt. vii. 7—11.

‡ Acts i. 13, 14; ii. 1.

the larger company lifted up their voices with one accord in mingled praise and prayer, on the safe return of Peter and John from the hostile Council, they were again openly filled with His divine energy, and as they had desired spake the word with boldness.\* The Lord, indeed, has expressly encouraged Christians to such united prayer by His gracious declaration; for "wherever two or three are gathered together in His name,"† His presence and Spirit, or manifested favor, are with them; so that if that holy violence, which distinguished the worshippers in that upper chamber in Jerusalem, was again exhibited, whether by larger or by smaller congregations, a similar blessing would assuredly descend upon them from on high.

It is not, therefore, solitary and secret prayer, which is really here enjoined, but that secret and unostentatious communion with a heavenly Father, whether in public, in social, or in private prayer, which an internal retreat from the whirl of secular things, and from the notice of our fellows, and the fixed concentration of the thoughts upon God alone in heavenly aspirations, as if no eye was upon us but His, will enable us fully to enjoy.

Superstitious, trifling, or vain repetitions,† are ob-

\* Acts iv. 23—31.

† Matt. xviii. 20.

‡ Chrysostom explains *βαρρολογία* (in ver. 7) by *φλυαρία*, referring it to petitions for worldly or unnecessary things, as well as to long prayers, not protracted by importunity, but spun out with a multitude of useless words. T. vii. p. 197; T. viii. p. 244; T. v. p. 153.



viously inconsistent with such worship. Many heathens and Mahommedans appear to be very devout, and very sincere; but they worship "an unknown God," and expect an answer on account of the length and number of their prayers, or the copiousness and variety of their expressions; and this error has even crept into the professing church; as if the Lord had not exclusive respect to the spirit of the supplicant. But, as He is a spirit, "they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."\* He understands our thoughts afar off; He is acquainted with all our ways; there is not a word in our tongue, but He knows it perfectly;† whilst all the wants, desires and requests of His people are necessarily anticipated alike by His omniscience and by His love. Isaiah, indeed, emphatically says, "it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear;"‡ and it was thus that the commandment and declaration of mercy, graciously went forth at the very commencement of Daniel's supplication.§

We are cautioned against long prayers in the book of Ecclesiastes. "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business, and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words."|| And is no remonstrance to be addressed with solemn earnestness to those, who, in our day, seem like the priests of Baal,

\* John iv. 24. † Psalm cxxxix. 2—4. ‡ Isaiah lxxv. 24.

§ Daniel ix. 20, 21, 23.

|| Eccles. v. 2, 3.

to shout and to cry aloud, as if they hoped to rouse a slumbering God, or the better pierce the vault of heaven, and arrest the attention of an absent Lord, by the thunder of their voices? We must speak with tenderness of the errors of weak and ill instructed brethren; but surely there must be something amiss, or sadly defective in their notions of spiritual worship, and of the character of a Holy Spirit. As genuine importunity is not exhibited by much speaking, neither is spiritual earnestness by noisy vociferation. The dove is a timid bird, soon scared away; let us beware how we grieve the Spirit, thus symbolised. Jesus Christ is emphatically described as neither "striving, nor crying, nor causing His voice to be heard in the streets."\* His word drops as the rain, and distils as the dew;† His presence is manifested in "the still small voice,"‡ whispering in the heart of the individual; and His faithful ones have drunk into His meek and gentle Spirit, and are thus conformed to His image.

The willingness of Jehovah to hear prayer, and His readiness to give "exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think," because He is a Father, pure and unchangeable in the depth and tenderness of His love, unerring in His knowledge of all our circumstances, trials, and necessities, and full of sympathy for the afflicted, should embolden us to approach Him at all times, with childlike simplicity. For we only need

\* Isaiah xlii. 2; Matt. xii. 19.      † Deut. xxxii. 2; Psalm lxxii. 6.

‡ 1 Kings xix. 11—13.

to draw near to Him,\* that we may realise His nearness to us. He sees His people, "when yet a great way off," and "rests in His love" towards them; so that He will more than satisfy their souls by His abundant mercies.

Let none despair, who tremblingly and anxiously maintain their footing on the Rock, when all things around them seem to be overwhelmed by the power of the Adversary, as they look too intently upon the surrounding waves, and listen with uneasiness to their loud and increasing roar, sitting there in darkness and in gloom. Assuredly, whatever may be the present alternations of their experience, they are perfectly secure, and shall speedily regain light and joy, if they will but wait patiently upon Him. A rainbow already spans the raging billows, formed in the dashing spray; and when Jesus speaks; all shall be peace. For true prayer can never be in vain, though the answer may be deferred. He who hears in secret will answer *openly*, and thus abundantly recompense the confidence of His waiting servants.

The Lord proceeds to set a model of prayer before His disciples, the better to enforce and illustrate His meaning. "*After this manner† therefore pray ye; Our*

\* Luther's rule is admirable. "Use few words, but many thoughts and feelings; and above all let these be profound. The less you speak, the better you pray. Few words and much thought marks the Christian's,—many words and little thought the heathen's, prayer.

† Literally "thus."

*Father, which art in heaven, hallowed\* be thy Name; Thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven: give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* (v. 9—15.)

We learn from St. Luke that this prayer was given anew to the disciples, in reply to a request which one of them made to Him to this effect; "Lord teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."† We must, therefore, regard the words as a prescript form, as well as an example of the manner, in which the children of God may acceptably pour out their hearts before Him, in brief but comprehensive sentences, winged with faith, and impelled heavenwards by earnest desire and concentrated feeling. Weight and brevity are characteristic of the prayers recorded in Scripture, because the heart of the supplicant was in them, and gave energy to the simplest language. He could not ramble, because his mind was fixed on "the one thing needful;" he could not trifle, because his eye was upon Jehovah;

\* Honoured or revered. (Campbell.) His Name secures our souls, guarantees our perseverance, and multiplies our peace.

† Luke xi. 1. He replied, "when ye pray, say."

he sought no rhetorical flourishes, because he was addressing a loving Father, who anticipated all his requests, and on whose affection he relied.

Let none hastily adopt the prevalent prejudice against forms. Leighton admits that they easily turn to coldness and formality, if much used and leant upon; but he justly regards this as mainly owing to our own dulness and want of spiritual affection, rather than to anything inseparable from their nature. For "the soul that is intent upon the thing itself heeds not the terms in which it is expressed;" and we cannot doubt but that desires, which "move in such a constant way, have more evidence of sincerity and true vigor in them," than those which can only be excited by novel expressions. "The Lord (indeed) bestows rich gifts upon some of His servants for His own glory and the good of His church;" but continual variety in prayer may often be desired for the gratification of the intellect rather than of the heart, and usually excites no more than false flashes of temporary devotion, instead of spiritual feelings and heavenly affections. "Mistake it not; the Spirit of prayer hath not His seat in the invention, but in the affection. In this many deceive themselves, in that they think His work to be mainly in furnishing new supplies of thoughts and words; no, it is mainly in exciting the heart anew at times of prayer to break forth itself in ardent desires to God, whatever the words be, whether new or old, yea, possibly without words, and then most powerful when it words it least, but

vents in sighs and groans that cannot be expressed. Our Lord understands the language of these perfectly, and likes it best. He knows and approves the meaning of His own Spirit, and looks not to the outward appearance, the shell of words, as men do.”\*

It is evident that no intelligible distinction can be drawn between forms in prose and forms in verse, whether of supplication or of praise. Unless, therefore, we adopt the views of the Society of Friends on this subject, which have at least the merit of consistency, we cannot possibly *believe*, whatever we may hastily affirm, from want of due consideration, that forms (necessarily) limit the Spirit. Christians, generally at least, are delighted with familiar hymns, and that the more, the more familiar they have become. And yet those pious men, who have neither the power, nor the desire, to extemporise these, unquestionably “sing them with the spirit, as well as with the understanding;”† and, therefore, neither grieve the Holy Ghost, nor restrain His gracious influences, when they thus lift up their voices and their hearts, in oft repeated strains, to Him, “that inhabits the praises of Israel.”‡

Whether, however, we prefer a form in public worship, or adopt the habit of extemporaneous supplication, (for the question is not one of principle, but of feeling and experience,) let our preference be without bitterness or cavilling, as we still remember that every

\* See Rom. viii. 26, 27.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

‡ Psalm xxii. 3.

thing lawful is not invariably expedient, and that a God of love prefers mercy to sacrifice. Above all, let us take heed to our spirits, aware how apt our minds and hearts ever are to wander, and how continually Satan strives to insinuate distracting thoughts, whether we hear or read, or pray or sing; and that, as one long since too truly intimated, if God were extreme to mark our transgressions, our wanderings in times of prayer would alone condemn us.\* Let us remember and emulate His compassions, and never make a man "an offender for a word."

It is not a little remarkable, that portions of the Lord's prayer resemble petitions, ordinarily current amongst the Jews, "though He, in whom was all fulness and wisdom, was not scarce of matter and words;" as if to intimate, as Leighton observes, how inconsiderable variety and novelty in prayer were in His esteem.

Neither can we suppose, that this formula was superseded by the Pentecostal gifts, as a mere lisping of infancy, or as a portion of milk adapted for babes, which established believers could not require. Rather may we feel more deeply our inability to use it aright, the more we grow in wisdom and in holiness, whilst we repeat it as the language of adopting love, breathing

\* Chrysost. T. i. p. 278. When it was said, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint *upon his knees*," the deceitfulness of the heart was forgotten. Can such an one always pray? See Psalm lxxvii. 4. Surely prayer is a greater deep than most imagine.

in us through the interceding Spirit, as it expresses the feelings of those, whose hearts are circumcised to love the Lord their God with all their energies and faculties, and to *seek His glory above all things*.

Nor can we feel perfectly satisfied, when we listen to devotional exercises, or peruse modern forms of prayer, where we notice a wide departure from this model, and an utter forgetfulness of its characteristics. A want of unction too often becomes tediously apparent in the midst of polished diction, and perhaps elaborate sentences; our hearts cannot sympathise, nor our minds follow, nor our attention be maintained.

But, as Coleridge called the compendious words before us, (“which God alone could have taught,”)\* an encyclopædia of prayer, and of all moral and religious philosophy† under the form of prayer, so have they naturally become the subject of repeated and devout comment by divines in every age, with varying ability and accuracy, but with unvarying admiration.

In dwelling more in detail upon them, we would notice as the prominent characteristics of this formula; first, its brevity, to remind us that we are not heard for our much speaking; secondly, its comprehensiveness,

\* Tertull. de Orat. chap. ix. The honour of God, the profession of faith, the surrender of our will, the expression of hope, the prayer for life, the acknowledgment of our sins, the pressure of temptation, and the demand for protection, are the points noticed by the vehement African.

† Compare Chrysost. T. v. p. 154. *ἐν ἧς διδασκαλία* and *τῶν βίου τελείου παιδαγωγία*.



as it blends the aspirations of angels with the longings of frail and suffering men; thirdly, its method, as it passes from divine to individual concerns, or from the glory of the Creator to the necessities of the creature; fourthly, its bold freedom of supplication, free alike from unmeaning verbiage and ostentatious rhetoric, as addressed to a Heavenly Father; fifthly, its charity, as it teaches us to bear upon our hearts the whole family of God,\* and to ask for the simultaneous gift of common blessings to them all; and lastly, its faith, as it addresses Him directly and immediately, as known to be our reconciled God, and as it teaches us to ask in the first place, and indeed all but exclusively, for spiritual benefits.

“Our Father, which art in heaven!” It will be observed, that throughout this discourse Christ invariably speaks of God in this manner, assuming that the relationship thus expressed was the common privilege of all those whom he was addressing, and that they were already conscious of it. Augustine, however, alleges, that we nowhere read that they of the Old Covenant were bidden to say “our Father;” and that their word was rather “Master,” as their relation was a servile one. But the acknowledged *hints* of the higher relation† were sufficiently plain to lead the Pharisees to

\* Thus teaching us by the constant use of the plural number to guard against dissensions with our brethren. Chrysost. T. vii. p. 203, &c.

† Trench p. 257, 258. The hints are pointed out as occurring, Isaiah i. 2; lxiii. 16; Psalm lxxxii. 6; Mal. i. 6.

recognise it. "We have one Father, even God."\* Thus, according to the apostle, "*the adoption*" pertained to them as Israelites by birth;† even as Moses had called them "the children of the Lord God;"‡ and David exultingly praised Him as their Father, when he contemplated the abundant offerings, which the people presented for the proposed temple§ of Jehovah.

Yet whatever might be the nominal honours of Israel, and the mercy of their God, in nourishing and bringing them up as His children,|| the multitude rebelled against Him, and had neither the power, nor the inclination, to realise this glorious privilege. Hence the indignant remonstrance of the Lord,¶ recorded by St. John; "if God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; but ye are of your father, the devil, *and* the lusts of your father ye will do."¶ To those only who received Him, through faith in His Name, was the power or privilege imparted of becoming the sons of God; since they had been born, not simply by carnal descent from Abraham, but of God, by the power of His Spirit operating upon their hearts, according to His own will, through the instrumentality of His word;\*\* and these alone could really use this prayer with intelligence and truth.

\* John viii. 41.

† Rom. ix. 4.

‡ Deut. xiv. 1.

§ 1 Chron. xxix. 10.

|| Isaiah i. 2.

¶ John viii. 42; 44.

\*\* John i. 12, 13; James i. 18; 1 Peter i. 23.

The omission of Christ's own Name\* has perplexed some persons; but, as Howels beautifully observed, *that* is necessarily implied; for God is "our Father," only because He is His, and we are His brethren; so that it is the Lord Himself, who, as it were, takes us by the hand, and thus leads us to the throne of grace, and as our Elder Brother bids us say with Him, "Our Father!" For it is He, who, as our great High Priest, ever animates our faith, and gives boldness to our supplications; whilst His Spirit, sent forth into our hearts, "because we are Sons," enables and constrains us to cry, "Abba, Father,"† whenever we pray aright.

Here, too, we all unite together in common supplications, as one in Him, and one with each other, a blessed family of beloved sons and daughters, bound together in harmony and mutual love, who can never pray for themselves alone, because they care for each other with unvarying sympathy. And yet, alas! this solemn privilege is too little remembered in actual life. Discord has been sown amongst brethren; and each section of the divided church has been more anxious about denominational peculiarities and private views, than about the glory of their common Lord, and the propagation of common truth. It was thus with the

\* On the same principle they might much more naturally have been perplexed by the prayer, Acts iv. 24; 29.

† Gal. iv. 6. Nor let it be forgotten that when Jesus says, "at that day ye shall ask in my name," he adds, "I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me," &c. John xvi. 26, 27.

tribes of Israel of old; and their mutual jealousies and contests rendered them an easier prey to their adversaries. But union inevitably fails, when ungodliness and worldliness creep in, or spiritual declension blinds the minds of men to the distinctness and grandeur of "the faith once delivered to the saints," and to the comparative insignificance of all those separate peculiarities and points of controversy, which are the occasion of divisions amongst Christians. Those who are not really united to the Head can never be heartily united to each other; for wherever the love of God is rejected, or forgotten, or even regarded with lukewarmness, party spirit and evil passions will gain the ascendancy, and dogmas will be accounted more precious than charity. On the contrary, when the Christian rises by true faith to his Heavenly Father, in delightful communion with Him, he ever descends to his brethren by love, in friendly, self-denying intercourse and peaceful fellowship with them.

It is obvious, that, however powerful our natural vision may be, or however accurate our science, and exquisitely perfect our instruments of observation may become, they will avail nothing for the time, whilst mists and vapours accumulating below, or denser clouds above, entirely shroud the material heavens from our view. Neither with all our intellectual acumen, and scriptural knowledge, and elaborate creeds, or exact articles of separate communion, shall we be enabled to gaze with comfort upon the great Sun of Righteousness, or to gain any spiritual profit, whilst we are content

to live amidst the storms and tempests of angry controversy, and of overweening self-confidence. Howe once said, "there can be no partition walls, through which love will not easily open a way of friendly commerce, by which we may insensibly slide more and more into one another's heart;" but we must except those, which are wantonly raised by continual attempts at proselytism, or by the constant agitation of points of discussion, the importance of which is exaggerated by proud and sarcastic spirits. Believers who *dwell in love* habitually soar aloft on the wings of heavenly meditation; and to those, who look down from this height of intimate communion with a common Father, breathing the holy atmosphere of heaven, all other partition walls on earth will sink into their real insignificance, or rather become altogether indiscernible. It will be their constant aim to act as Peacemakers in the church: for love, as the manifestation, the power, and the essence of the spirit of adoption, occupies the place of the Shechinah, once the glory of Solomon's temple, in that more glorious edifice of living stones, which is "built upon the foundation of prophets and apostles," to be the habitation of God through the Spirit, "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone," knitting Jew and Gentile securely and harmoniously together.\*

"Hallowed be thy Name."† God is *first* in His own sight, and He must be so in ours, when our love towards Him becomes the supreme principle of our

\* See Eph. ii.

† Neither shalt thou profane the Name of thy God. Levit. xix. 12.

souls, pervading our minds and sanctifying all our energies, as His law requires.\* All things were created by Him for His own glory;† and this we should earnestly desire to behold without a veil, neither obscured by the sin, nor opposed by the selfishness of man, whilst we walk in His light.

History records many wonderful instances of heroic self-denial in wives and mothers, daughters and patriots. They have become so completely absorbed in the welfare and honour of the object of their affection, that they have immolated self, without even the consciousness of doing any thing extraordinary. Such is the devotion of the loyal creature to a glorious Creator! Our happiness really consists in the sanctification of His Name, and in yielding to Him that honour and glory, which He claims from universal being.‡ This, however, is sadly forgotten; and His Name is hated and blasphemed, or “taken in vain,” or “treated with irreverence and disrespect,” by myriads around us; who may perhaps occasionally honour Him with their lips, but have their hearts habitually alienated from Him;§ and therefore neither serve Him with reverence and godly fear,”|| as a Holy Being and a Righteous Judge, nor confide in Him, as a faithful and merciful God; nor anxiously seek to know Him, as the Author of their being.¶

But God is jealous of His Name. Ezekiel not only

\* Mark xii. 30, as stated by the Scribe.

† See Rev. iv. 11.

‡ Psalm xcvi. 8.

§ Matt. xv. 8.

|| Heb. xii. 28, 29.

¶ See Acts xvii. 24—28.

repeatedly declares that He wrought on this account in the midst of the apostacy and misery of Israel, lest *it* should be *polluted*, or lest a false, dishonouring notion should prevail of His Attributes and Character; but also speaks of His pity for His holy Name, and His eventual restoration of the Jews, not (so much) for their own sakes, as in order to convince the heathen, that He alone is Jehovah, when He is sanctified in His people before their eyes, and thus fills their minds with awe and profound veneration.\*

When the spies brought up an evil report of the land of promise, this threw the Israelites into a state of frantic despair and blind rebellion; by which they entailed a sentence of wrath upon themselves. Moses, however, pleaded for them, both on the ground of the reproach, which their destruction would bring upon the Name of Jehovah in Egypt, and on account of that signal revelation of His compassion and long-suffering, which He had so graciously vouchsafed, when He made all His goodness pass before His servant.† Jehovah answered, "I have pardoned according to thy word;"‡ but He then added, with

\* Ezek. xx.; xxxvi. 21, &c. See Isaiah vi.; Rev. iv. 8. Campbell observes that no mention is made of God's wise, or powerful, or gracious Name, but only of His fearful, glorious, or great Name, &c., as these comparative terms bear an immediate reference to the sentiments of the humble worshipper. But the proclamation of His Name in Exodus is a special revelation of His goodness.

† Exodus xxxiii. 19; xxxiv. 5—7; Num. xiv.

‡ Num. xiv. 20.

reference to the other plea, "as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."\* For His name *shall* be known and glorified universally, in its thrice holy character, as by the Seraphim in the vision of the prophet,† as soon as the appointed hour shall arrive. This promise not only re-appears in Isaiah,‡ in connection with the Messiah, and the conversion of the Gentiles, or the glory in which He shall rest, or give rest, and the lasting security of the inhabitants of Zion, but also again in Habakkuk,§ in striking contrast with the labours of *the people*, now wearying themselves for very vanity. For the travails of this restless world shall also cease; and the groans of the church shall then be exchanged for the glory of manifested "adoption, even the redemption of the body;" when the salvation, for which it is now anxiously waiting, like Jacob and Simeon of old, shall be fully consummated, at the second advent of the Lord.¶ His right hand and His holy arm will "get Himself the victory;"¶ His faithfulness shall be triumphantly established; and nothing will remain to mar that grand chorus of heaven and earth, which shall eventually unite in the Psalmist's hymn of grateful and adoring praise, worshipping the Father in the beauties of holiness.

If, then, we eagerly long, we should no less anxiously pray for fresh earnestness of that triumph, and for the

\* Num. xiv. 21.      † Isaiah vi. 3.      ‡ Isaiah xi. 9, 10.

§ Habak. ii. 13, 14.      ¶ See Gen. xlix. 18.

¶ See Psalm xcvi. 1; Phil. ii. 9—11, &c.



conversion of the blasphemers, formalists and profligates around us, that the name of Christ and of the Father may be more and more widely honoured. For ourselves, also, we would fain cherish the solemn thought, that if "there is mercy with the Lord," it is "that He may be feared,"\* and that if, as redeemed from our sins by the precious blood of Christ, "we now boldly call upon the Father," we are the more bound to "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear;"† or, in other words, earnestly to seek His *grace*, that we may all continuously hallow the Name of our Heavenly Father, in thought, word, and deed, and induce others to do the same. A pure life, and lips purged like the prophet's by the live coal from off His altar, will alone enable us to speak and work effectually to this end.‡ Our prayer should serve as a daily memorial of this truth, and thus bind us to the greater watchfulness and diligence in our daily walk. When Jesus prayed, "Father glorify thy Name," the voice from heaven replied, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again;"§ and in a measure it will be the same with us, if we seek it in simple faith.

"Thy kingdom come."|| We have already seen,

\* Psalm cxxx. 4.

† 1 Peter i. 17—19. Compare in connection with this Mal. i. 6.

‡ Chrysost. T. iii. p. 370, explains the petition "may thy Name be glorified by our life." Cf. ib. 595, on Psalm cxlviii. 1; and contrast Rom. ii. 21—24 with Matt. v. 16, to confirm this.

§ John xii. 28.

|| The interpretation of Chrysostom, who only expresses a desire that the kingdom may come spiritually, or that sin may not *reign* in

that this cannot be, until the stone cut without hands breaks the mystical image in pieces, in the last phase of Gentile power, or of ungodly usurpation, and the renewed earth is filled with manifestations of the divine presence and love. At that time, "righteousness, peace and spiritual joy," will be universally diffused; and Jesus "shall see of the travail of His soul, and be (wholly) satisfied." For then "death shall be swallowed up in victory;" and all the saints shall be gathered together, and "shine forth as the Sun in the kingdom of their Father," in "the likeness of His glorious body."\* It is for this consummated happiness, when His name, as already stated, shall be universally hallowed, that the church professes to long, and therefore is taught to pray with increasing earnestness, as the promise seems to be delayed; because this delay would otherwise tend to deaden our souls, and to expose us helpless and hopeless to the assaults of Satan, and to the allurements of the present world, as if God had forsaken or deceived us! Our prayer at once reminds us of the promise, and incites us to more habitual preparedness of mind, that "we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming"† in that day.

our mortal bodies, (T. v. p. 157. See Rom. vi. 12, 13,) is evidently inaccurate; unless we regard this petition as comprehended in the greater, that "it may so come to us now, that we may be found in it then," as Augustine phrases it. Trench p. 262.

\* Isaiah liii. 11; 2 Thess. ii. 1; Matt. xiii. 43; Phil. iii. 20, 21, &c.

† 1 John ii. 28.

“Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” This must necessarily be the case, when that which is perfect is come; because perfect happiness can only be realised in entire submission and conformity to that divine will, which is essentially good and wise and holy: so that, if we now enjoy a pledge and earnest of future glory in the kingdom of grace, our prayer for the accomplishment of the divine will must be sanctified by our personal labours to fulfil it, in an earnest course of righteousness and truth.

Naturally, however, man ever aspires to independence, and scorns subjection and control, like a wild ass's colt in the wilderness. When, too, the hand of the Almighty is upon him, and “hedges up his way with thorns,” or baffles his schemes, and dashes the cup of pleasure or of honour from his lips, or brings him into the house of mourning, or racks his body with pain and weakness, he commonly frets, and murmurs, and repines, still perversely rebelling against the Lord. Such was the case of Israel in the wilderness. They would not bow to the rod, or look beyond the immediate trial to the wisdom and faithful love of a covenant God, and patiently wait for the result. But it is vain “to kick against the pricks,” or to struggle against the Almighty. A wayward child obstinately maintains the conflict, till he sinks exhausted. Happy is he who yields at once: “it is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good;”<sup>\*</sup> for He cannot err; whether,

<sup>\*</sup> 1 Sam. iii. 18.

therefore, He gives or takes away, we should equally bless His glorious Name!\* This is the fruit of conversion, the result of great grace, the triumph of faith in lively exercise. This brings our proud hearts into subjection, and constrains us to lie as clay in the hands of the potter, meekly acquiescing in the divine will, even when most contrary to our own inclinations and wishes.

There seems, indeed, to be a constant struggle and conflict, while we are in the world, for the flesh still cleaves to the dust, and lusts against the spirit;† and there are too many ties binding us to the things of time and sense, too many impediments on every side to a walk of self-denying holiness, too many earthly members to be mortified, to render the life of a Christian one of ease and present tranquility. But the grace of the Lord is as sufficient now, as it was in the days of Aaron,‡ Eli, and Job; and though wave shall follow wave, all earthly ties be broken, all outward sources of comfort be dried up, and temptations from within and from without be multiplied on an enfeebled body and exhausted spirit, we shall become “more than conquerors” through the great Captain of our Salvation, if we will but *look away* from everything seen and temporal, and fixing our eye upon “the Author and Finisher of our faith,” cast ourselves unreservedly upon Him.§

\* Job. i. 21; ii. 10.

† See Psalm cxix. 25; and Gal. v. 17.

‡ Levit. x. 1—3.

§ See Rom. viii.; 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18; Heb. xii. 1, 2; 1 Peter v. 7.

Not that our will is to be swallowed up in God's. Observe the solemn prayer of Jesus Himself in Gethsemane.\* His soul was sorrowful even unto death; He prayed with such intensity of spirit in that cold night, that "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground;" He deprecated suffering as a perfect man; but He added, "nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Thus He bows to the divine will, as supreme, meekly resigning His own; and is prepared to drink, without murmuring, the appointed cup of sorrow; but, *if it had been possible*, He would have avoided it. His will was resigned, not swallowed up in another's. It cannot be otherwise with us; let us not write bitter things against ourselves, because we have not attained to an impossibility, or to what if attained would destroy our individuality. We may have deeper floods, more protracted agony, to pass through in this world, *before* we can even say, Thy will be done; but let this attainment suffice us. We are frail and erring creatures, often misconstruing the ways of divine Providence; but "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."†

In another point of view, the petition before us involves the diffusion of perfect holiness throughout the earth, as implicit obedience to the commandment of God

\* Matt. xxvi. 36—44; Mark xiv. 32—39; Luke xxii. 39—44.

† Rom. viii. 28.

is the characteristic of the host of heaven; and if we know in any measure the blessedness of the pure in heart,\* we must long to see this more extensively realised amongst our fellow men, and the rule and joy of angels becoming also their rule and joy.

We know that it shall be so universally, when His kingdom appears; but meanwhile we pray for such outpourings of the Spirit, as may give us more extended earnestness of that glorious period, that more and more on every side may even now be *made willing* by His power to love and obey Him heartily, and that we and all His children may “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God!”†

Let us beware, however, how we anticipate His time. Much shall be done hereafter, which cannot be accomplished now. Moses knew by faith that he was ordained to deliver Israel, but he involved himself in trouble by attempting this too soon. The people could not understand the divine purpose, when he thought it must have been obvious to all;‡ but he should have waited, until the Lord had specially called and commissioned him; which was not until forty years later. The same thing occurs in the ordinary course of divine Providence. The present triumphant ruler of the French

\* Above p. 45, 46. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” 1 Thess. v. 3.

† Coloss. iv. 12.

‡ Acts vii. 25. This was typical of the rejection of Christ and the similar postponement of deliverance to Israel.

once anticipated his day, and failed egregiously, and was even accounted a fool for his apparently preposterous attempts. Let us not run before we are sent. If we pray, as our Lord teaches us to pray, we must wait for some clear unmistakeable signal of His will. "In all thy ways acknowledge the Lord, and He shall direct thy paths :"\* not indeed literally by the pillar and the cloud, but by His word, or by some external event, which it will be impossible for us to misinterpret.† We may have to wait but a very little while.

"Give us this day our daily bread." We "need but little here below;" and for that we may confidently labour and humbly pray; it shall not be withheld from us.‡

But we cannot fail to recognise an allusion in this place to the miraculous supply of manna, gathered by the Israelites every morning in the wilderness, "when the dew was gone up," and when each collected sufficient for his household, whether much or little, but knew that he could neither gather more, nor lay up any store for the future. This is an acknowledged type of the Messiah and of the spiritual food, which His disciples enjoy in communion with Him, whilst it was an actual supply of the temporary necessities of Israel; so that it teaches us at once our entire dependence upon the

\* Prov. iii. 6.

† See Acts xvi. 6—10. The prohibition to enter Asia was only temporary: see xix. 10.

‡ Isaiah xxxiii. 16; Psalm xxxiv. 10; xxxvii. 25.

Providence of the Father, and upon the grace of the Son. The petition, therefore, before us comprehends whatever is necessary to maintain our bodies and souls in health and vigor;\* but as we ask this for all the children of God, as well as for ourselves, we are thus doubly bound to contribute all that lies in our power to the present and eternal welfare of our brethren.

Moderate desires will never be disappointed. Jacob's vow at Bethel is peculiarly instructive, as the apostle evidently refers to it in his epistle to Timothy. "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat,† and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God."‡ But the Lord Himself proceeds in the sequel to assure His disciples of the security and comfort of relying simply, without any anxious care, upon the Providence of a Heavenly Father, whose kingdom and righteousness they were seeking above all things.§

This, then, is the main point. For Jesus is the

\* So Augustine. Trench p. 264.

† Philo observes that *bread* affords sufficient aliment to the philosopher, (lover of wisdom) and that it maintains the body in health, and preserves our faculties clear and sound. (De Vict. iii.) Bread or bread-stuffs still constitute the entire food of most of the Orientalists.

‡ Gen. xxviii. 20, 21; with xlviii. 15; Prov. xxx. 8, (feed me with food convenient for me); 1 Tim. vi. 8. For godliness with contentment is great gain. (Ib. ver. 6.)

§ Below vers. 25—34.



living bread, which came down from heaven, that a man might eat thereof, and not die.\* If we abide in Him, we shall lack nothing, but go in and out, and find pasture, as His own sheep;† and as our days or circumstances require, we shall obtain strength to overcome temptation, to do His will, and to glorify His name; for He has promised never to leave us nor forsake us, but in His unchangeable love richly to “supply all our need,”‡ whatever that may be.

“Forgive us our trespasses (or debts), as we forgive our debtors.” Mutual love and forbearance should mark all our intercourse with our fellow men; but “it must needs be that offences come;” and amidst the diversity of tastes, characters, and pursuits, which prevail in the world, misunderstandings and disagreements will occur; and as our several interests clash, and our opposing tempers come into collision, wrong will be done, and perhaps the feelings intentionally, or otherwise, may be deeply wounded; or very probably still more serious quarrels will break out. We cannot all see a subject in the same light; but we must act in the light which we have. The record of the sharp contention, which arose between men so holy, so affectionate, so immediately under the powerful guidance of the Spirit, as Paul and Barnabas, in the case of Mark, is at once a pledge of the

\* John vi. 27; 33; 50, 51.

† Psalm xxiii. 1; John x. 9.

‡ Deut. xxxiii. 25; 1 Cor. x. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 9; Heb. iv. 16; xiii. 5; Phil. iv. 19.

fidelity of the sacred historian, and an instructive example to us of human frailty in the children of God. The friends parted in grief and anguish, if not in anger; one went *home* to Cyprus,\* the other proceeded to execute his ministry and visitation of love, confirming the infant churches in the faith; but on earth apparently they met no more to cheer and encourage each other! But when such quarrels arise, we must love and bless and pray for our adversaries; and we cannot do this, unless we forgive them, and as far as possible forget the wrong which we have endured. Those, assuredly, who delight in speaking evil of others, and readily take up a reproach against their neighbours, and magnify their faults, can never have seriously considered this.

The time of prayer is come. You call to mind the sins into which you have fallen, as you review the course of the day, and summon to the bar of conscience your actions and your motives, your words, and even your cherished thoughts and feelings. You feel that you have failed in much, very much; for you have too much light not to see the defilement which you have contracted, and the debt which you have incurred; but you know to whom you are indebted; it is to a Father; and you remember, that, when you feared Him as a Judge, and approached His throne of grace in penitence, and prayer, and faith, by Jesus' Christ, He freely justified you, "without money and without price,"

\* Acts iv. 36; xv. 36—41.

or any condition or qualification of your own; for you found at once pardon and peace, through the blood and righteousness of your Redeemer. But you again need forgiveness, and all your brethren need similar forgiveness, as they require daily bread, and have been taught to pray for it; and therefore you now pray for this also, on behalf of all the family of God. Observe, however, that your petition is here clogged with a condition. Every other promise or petition in this prayer is absolute, and will in due time be fulfilled, whatever may be the circumstances of the individual petitioner; but it is not so in this instance. As Howells beautifully observed, "God justifies once as a Judge, and forgives daily as a Father;" and therefore He now requires you, in testimony of your sincerity and filial character, first to forgive your debtors, to excuse your brethren, and to dismiss every bitter and angry feeling from your bosom. Otherwise your prayer and hope are alike in vain!

Observe how repeatedly the Lord fixes our attention on this point. Blessed are the merciful! Be not angry without a cause; be reconciled to your brother, ere you complete your religious service; agree with him quickly; love, bless, benefit, pray for your enemies, that you may be children of God! And here again, at the close of this prayer, Jesus solemnly reminds us, that the unforgiving cannot be forgiven! There is no possibility of evasion. Peter subsequently inquired, how often he ought to forgive an offending brother, and thought it

some great thing, when he said, "till seven times?" But his Lord would not permit him to stop there, emphatically replying, "until seventy times seven," to intimate that there is to be no limitation to the exercise of forbearance and compassion, as our hopes depend upon the glorious truth, that there is no limit to that which God displays towards His children. The parable of the two debtors solemnly enforces the rule;\* "if ye forgive, ye shall be forgiven; if ye forgive not, neither shall ye be forgiven;" and a nearly similar maxim has been quoted from the works of Philo, the Alexandrian Jew.†

Whenever your brother *seeks* reconciliation, he must be accepted. "Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, *rebuke* him; and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, *saying, I repent*, thou shalt forgive him."‡ It was on this occasion, as related by St. Luke, that the apostles, as if overwhelmed by a sense of their weakness, and of their inability to display such meekness and forbearance, earnestly exclaimed, "Lord, increase our faith."§ For nothing less will enable us to "quench the fiery darts of Satan," or constrain us to emulate the divine love, by presenting to our minds a clearer

\* Matt. xviii. 23—35; vi. 14, 15; Mark xi. 25, 26.

† Fragm p. 670, ed. Mang. ἀφίσει ἀντιδίδεται ἀφίσεις.

‡ Luke xvii. 3, 4.

§ Ib. ver. 5. See Eph. vi. 16.

view of the unceasing condescension of our Lord, and of the energy of His grace, who died for our sins, and has raised us from the lowest depth of moral degradation to a participation in the glory of His kingdom. It is thus that Paul exhorts the Ephesians\* to put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour and evil speaking, with all malice, and to be kind to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving *one another*, even as God for Christ's sake had forgiven them. A sense of unmerited privilege most effectually prompts to that all embracing charity, which "covers a multitude of sins" in an offending brother.† We then feel with Sir Matthew Hale, that, if resentment is *manly* in the eyes of the world, forgiveness is God-like; and cheerfully seize "the opportunity of showing forth His own image, mercy and forgiveness," in compliance with the precept of the Lord.

It must, therefore, be carefully remembered, that He is here legislating for children and heirs of the kingdom. It is not that our gracious conduct merits pardon, but that our habitual enjoyment of forgiving love depends on our disposition towards others, and that we must not hope to enjoy any peace or assured comfort, as long as evil, unkind and malicious thoughts or feelings are cherished in our bosoms; and that if we flatter ourselves that God's reconciled countenance is upon us under such circumstances, on account of past experience, we are really labouring under a fatal

\* Eph. iv. 31, 32.

† 1 Peter iv. 8.

delusion. Our prayer, therefore, will be a perpetual memorial to us of our solemn responsibility; that the chastened child, who has forgotten this, may thus be led to repentance, and, in the way of reconciliation and forgiveness of wrongs endured, may once more enjoy access to a gracious Father, and the assurance of His love; and that the hollowness of the false professor may thus be detected and exposed, as he is found obstinately cherishing an unforgiving temper and malicious feeling to the last.

Nor let it be forgotten that the words before us assure us of the sympathy of all the children of God, in this righteous government of their Father.

The repentance, however, of the injurious man, or rather his desire of forgiveness, and the confession of his fault, seem to be implied as necessary to fix the guilt of unpardonable malice, and of withholding pardon, upon the soul.\* For God Himself will not show mercy to the impenitent, nor to those who refuse to humble themselves before Him, in lowly confession of their sins.†

“And lead us not into temptation.” Conscious of weakness and helplessness, we must deprecate falling into situations of danger, which to the multitude ever prove fatal, and in which our faith might fail, or our passions draw us aside, or our love expire. We know

\* Both in St. Luke xvii., and in the parable Matt. xviii.; and therefore *this* should be supplied in other places.

† 1 John i. 8—10.

that we cannot stand one moment longer than our Father supports us.\* “Our adversary, the devil is ever going about, seeking whom he may devour;”† as “the Accuser of the brethren,”‡ he *desires* “to sift them as wheat,”§ that he may prove them to be but chaff; and he ever varies his devices, according to the circumstances of the times, or the character of the individuals whom he assails. “Let him that *thinketh* he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”|| Demoralisation is nothing more than the development of the natural propensities of the human heart by circumstances. The strongest fortification must fall at last before the power of the persevering enemy, unless it be relieved from *without*. Pride walks on the edge of a precipice, and rushes carelessly along in slippery paths. The saints have often fallen very low, because they were *but men*; therefore “the humble never should despair, but the strong should never presume.” Peter denied his Lord with oaths and curses;¶ he was almost gone; nothing intervened between him and destruction, but the intercession, and the loving hand, of the Saviour whom

\* Luther says, “it is not strange that a man should fall, but rather that he should rise and stand. The angels themselves, inconceivable thought! fell in heaven; and Adam in paradise!”

† 1 Peter v. 8.

‡ See Job i.; Zech. iii. 1; Rev. xii. 10.

§ Luke xxii. 31.

|| 1 Cor. x. 12.

¶ Those needless asseverations, which falsehood so often adopts, but which truth is wont to reject in conscious integrity.

he had denied. He had been warned, and warned in vain. "Pray, lest ye enter into temptation."\* But he was confident in himself, and "restrained prayer,"† and fell, for a perpetual warning to us. "Be not high minded, but fear." St. Paul, therefore, affectionately exhorts the *spiritual* members of the Galatian churches to *restore* any brother, when overtaken by a fault, "in the spirit of meekness," from the urgent *consideration* of their own weakness, *lest* they "also should be tempted,"‡ and fall in like manner.

Our Father, indeed, will keep all His children; for He has promised that "they shall not be tempted above" their power of endurance, and that He will invariably "make a way" for them "to escape" the danger or the snare, into which He leads them, or rather suffers them to be brought. But promises do not preclude the necessity of prayer; they only assure us that it will be effectual;§ and, therefore, we must pray not only for ourselves, but also for our weaker brethren, or rather for all, for whom Jesus is interceding in heaven, and against whom Satan is conspiring, and the world raging, that they may be enabled to realise their security, and enjoy the peace of God.

It is thus that we are here taught to say, "deliver us from evil;" that is, from whatever may hurt us, and, as far as possible, from whatever we naturally apprehend as evil; and not simply from Satan, as Chrysostom ex-

\* Luke xxii. 31—34; Matt. xxvi. 33—35; 37, 38; 41.

† Job. xv. 4.

‡ Gal. vi. 1.

§ Psalm lv. 22; l. 15, &c.



plains it. The apostle assured the Thessalonians, that a faithful God would establish them, and preserve them from evil; and he speaks of his own past and present deliverances, in the epistles to the Corinthians and to Timothy, as pledges from the Lord, assuring him of future deliverances "from every evil work," and of preservation to the end, even "unto His heavenly kingdom."\* This is the common privilege of all the children of God, as they also are chosen by Himself to inherit its glories; and as it was the accepted prayer of the sorrowful Jabez to be kept "from evil, that it might not grieve him."† Emmanuel, indeed, was manifested for this very purpose, that He might "save His people from their sins," deliver them "from the wrath to come," and from the fear of death, and "bruise Satan under their feet;" and "none can pluck them out of His hand."‡ Hence, although we must deprecate temptation on account of our own weakness, and thus bind ourselves to shun proximate occasions of sin, and to walk circumspectly, yet when temptations actually occur, without any fault or provocation of ours, we may rejoice;§ for we have nothing

\* 2 Thess. iii. 3; 2 Cor. i. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 17, 48. Compare Jacob's testimony, Gen. xlviii. 16.

† 1 Chron. iv. 10.

‡ Matt. i. 21; 1 Thess. i. 10; Heb. ii. 15; Rom. xvi. 20; John x. 27—30.

§ See Chrysost. T. vi. p. 827; T. iii. p. 569; 998; and Augustine as quoted by Trench p. 273.

to fear.\* God, who has deemed it necessary for us to drink the cup, will enable us to drink it without injury;† or, if He summons us to an arduous conflict, will so strengthen us by the might of His Holy Spirit, that we shall effectually overcome our adversaries. The floods, which Satan may pour out, cannot possibly rise *above* our Rock, or sweep away the poor, helpless, and perhaps trembling child, whom grace has led thither, and now holds securely upon it. Before the unfurled banner of the cross, the adversary must retire; and then a song of deliverance shall glorify our Father.

And this may happily tend to embolden the isolated Christian, who would shrink, faint with discouragement, before the Tempter, when he has no human friend, to whom he can communicate the bitterness, which fills his heart, or with whom he can take sweet counsel, or who will address him with words of sympathy. For even thus, whether named or not, he must be interested in every prayer of his brethren, scattered throughout the world, when they ask for deliverance; and their petitions are all sealed by the intercession of the Elder Brother, whom the Father *heareth always*, of whose sympathy we can never doubt, and of whose willingness and determination to *deliver* us from evil in due season, this very prayer, dictated by His wisdom, in necessary accordance with the will of that Father, is a most clear and sufficient guarantee.

\* For He keeps His church day and night, lest any hurt it. Isaiah xxvii. 3. See also Psalm cxxi.; Luke xii. 32, &c.

† Compare Matt. xxvi. 39, and John xviii. 11.

To Him, therefore, let us ascribe all glory. It is true, that the doxology before us, is omitted in the best copies, and unnoticed by Augustine, though quoted by Chrysostom.\* It is supposed that it was added from the Liturgies of the church, in which it was repeated by the minister, after the people had recited the prayer.† Its statements, however, are unquestionable. We call upon One, who is abundantly able to answer us. All power, dominion and glory now belong unto God; it is our delight to know this, and that it shall be even so for ever; and therefore we say, Amen. It is the truth, in which we glory.

## § 9.

*“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance;‡ for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”§ (v. 16—18.)*

\* Op. T. i. p. 225; T. v. p. 160; T. vii. p. 202; 224. Beausobre refers also to the author of Philopatris, (a tract ascribed to Lucian,) who recognises it as a part of the Lord's prayer.

† Liturg. Chrysost. Op. T. iv. p. 617. This piece, however, is grossly interpolated.

‡ Or, sullen.

§ “Openly,” is omitted in the best MSS, and should be excluded from the text, both here and in verses 4 and 6.

Fasting has ever been an ordinary accompaniment of earnest meditation and solemn prayer, intimating the abiding sympathy between the body and the soul; as it is calculated to abstract the mind from sensual and worldly objects, and to fix it more intently upon the divine, whether in self-loathing or in self-oblivion; or perhaps, rather, because food is naturally neglected, when the mind is either absorbed in heavenly contemplations,\* or overwhelmed by sorrow. But it is not, like prayer and almsgiving, the subject of express commandment and direct precept, since it is not invariably necessary, nor even universally expedient. It is, therefore, left to the discretion of each individual, or only occasionally prescribed under particular circumstances, when it must be suitable and expedient.

The contrary, indeed, is often assumed. Thus Augustine constantly interpreted the language of the Lord before us, as implying a command.† It is, however, certain that the apostles did not fast, like the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist; and that, when an objection was taken to their conduct on this account, their Master justified them by pointing out the incongruity of the practice with their position, as children of the Bridechamber, in the presence of the Bridegroom;‡ but surely a direct precept could not have been thus suspended. We are to give to the needy at all times,

\* Philo Leg. Alleg. l. 3 § 48.

† Trench p. 280.

‡ Matt. ix. 14, 15.

and should never be "weary in well doing." No bodily weakness nor particular circumstances can affect our obligation in this respect. In like manner, we are commanded and encouraged "to pray always," with the sweet assurance of an invariable welcome at the throne of grace: because we are always needy and dependent creatures, and must make all our requests known unto God,\* if we would obtain relief. On these points, positive and immutable rules pervade the whole volume of inspiration: but it is not the same with respect to fasting. Isaiah represents a spiritual fast from wickedness and selfishness as alone acceptable to Jehovah† and the divine John who dwells so much on prayer, and on the necessary manifestation of Christian love, kindness to the needy, has not a single allusion to the subject.

Jesus, indeed, spoke of His speedy removal, and declared that His disciples should fast in those days. The practice is thus essentially connected with a feeling of humiliation and sorrow. As it was unreasonable in the presence of the Lord of life, it must be no less incongruous in times of spiritual refreshment, or when the light of His reconciled countenance fills the heart with elevating and sanctifying joy: but that is a season specially adapted to prayer, and to acts of benevolence. It is, moreover, the divine will that His waiting people should constantly realise this experience, as they "mourn

\* Phil. iv. 6.

† Isaiah lviii. 6.

up with wings as eagles," or *run* with enlarged hearts in the way of His commandments, or *walk* consciously before Him in calm communion of spirit;\* and therefore fasting is never absolutely commanded. For the same reason we find no trace of the practice amongst the brethren in the *earlier* portion of the Acts of the Apostles; when we are told that "they ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."† On the contrary, however, abstinence is natural in an hour of anxious thought and spiritual dejection, or of national judgment, or of social trouble, or of family trial; and at such times it happily serves to stimulate, and to confirm weeping supplication.‡

Not that even then a sullen air or gloomy visage could be acceptable to God. So far from inculcating mournful attire, slovenly habits, or dejected looks, Jesus demands habitual cheerfulness;§ and He therefore here charges His disciples to "anoint their heads," as this was a customary token of rejoicing, especially connected with feasting, in order the more completely to conceal the fact of their fasting. Chrysostom justly observes that we are not to understand this literally, (any more than the previous exhortations;) but he unhappily refers in confirmation of this to the example of the

\* See Isaiah xl. 31.

† Acts ii. 46.

‡ See the Homily of the Anglican Church on Fasting.

§ See Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4; 1 Thess. v. 16; Psalm lxxxix. 16; Nehem. viii. 10.

monks;\* for those poor deluded men, whose filthy habits, weeping countenances, and self mortifications, though alike extravagant and ostentatious, have been enthusiastically praised by Jerome,† were not only ignorant of the joyful liberty of the Gospel, but evidently altogether reckless of the rule before us. Its principal object, however, was doubtless to warn us against hypocrisy.

The Pharisees were praised for their self-denial and zeal, and thus received the only recompense which they sought, whilst their souls were really more and more defiled, and their hearts more and more hardened by their wilful deceit. But it is incumbent upon the Christian, in this and every other religious service, to shun the slightest reference to human opinion, and the faintest desire to attract notice in the world. For why “should we constitute men our witnesses, when another is our Judge?”‡ Those who desire to secure the divine favor,§ or the only recompense which is of any value, must “do all things in the Name of the Lord Jesus.”

Another grand error of the early church was to mistake the means for the end, and to attach some

\* T. vii. p. 207, 208.

† See Dr. Gilly's quotations in his important work on *Vigilantius and His Times*, (about A.D. 400.)

‡ Chrysost. T. iii. p. 856.

§ Tam idoneus est ad conspicienda quæ in occulto fiunt, quam justus ad remuneranda quæ soli sibi fiunt. Tertull. de Virg. Vel. c. 13.

peculiar merit or excellence to fasting in itself, and therefore to render imperative, and to bind to times and seasons, what must invariably be left free. This error soon excited a species of rivalry amongst ardent professors, as to which of them should carry their fasts to the greatest extent; so that acts of extravagant folly, leading to spiritual pride,\* and ultimately to false doctrine, were often commended for their own sakes, as if they were really most admirable.† Grave writers began to regard the emaciated body with exquisite delight.‡ It was even pretended, that, as Adam sinned by eating, or by neglect of the prescribed duty of abstinence, with reference to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,§ so the church must be saved or blessed by abstinence from lawful indulgences. Chrysostom frequently indulged in rash assertions, and absurd declamation upon the subject. “As the approach of the swallow terminates winter, so the annual fast expels stormy passions from the soul. It was the parent of every good; the teacher of self-control and of every

\* Chrysostom warns against this snare of Satan. T. iii. p. 567.

† Some partook of nothing but bread and water during Lent; others passed two days without food; Chrysost. T. i. p. 72; others were yet more extravagant, like Olympias, the rich widow and friend of Chrysostom, whom he praised most hyperbolically in a familiar letter on that ground. T. iv. p. 703. Cf. Pallad Dial de S. Chrysost. p. 30; 36, &c. Some were driven mad by their excessive abstinence.

‡ Tertull. de Jejun § 17. Facilius si forte per angustam salutis introibit caro exilior; citius resuscitabitur caro levior, diutius in sepultura durabit caro aridior. Cf. Sozomen H. E. l. 3, c. 14, &c.

§ ὡς ἡντο τῆς ἐκείνου. Chrysost. T. ii. p. 4. Cf. T. i. p. 654.



virtue, or itself the most excellent virtue; adorning each age and sex, as it were, with a royal diadem; giving wings to the soul; leaving behind it edifying recollections!"\* At the same time, the orator, (or, as we should rather call him, the rhetorician,) was well aware that its value must ultimately be tested by its actual results; and these he elsewhere admits to have been few or none. His hearers, indeed, confessedly regarded it as sufficient in itself, whilst they continued utterly reckless of other duties;† but how could he have anticipated any other fruit of his teaching?

The plea of bodily weakness was considerably accepted, even in his day, for neglecting the customary fasts.‡ It was also felt to be preposterous to compel Monks in Gaul to live on the same scale of self-denial and abstemiousness, as the so-called (almost incorporeal) *angels* of Egypt.§ Much, thus obviously, depends upon climate, and individual temperament. The Mahomedan proverb intimates, that, in many cases, fasts only tend to render the temper more irritable. In other instances, they distract the thoughts, impair the mental energies, and shatter the whole nervous system, and thus defeat the very purpose, for which they were professedly undertaken.

\* T. ii. p. 879; T. i. p. 662; T. ii. p. 10; T. iii. p. 891; T. ii. p. 947, 948.

† T. vii. p. 425. It avails nothing, he tells them, if malice or evil is cherished in the heart. T. i. p. 277.

‡ T. ii. p. 92, 93; T. i. p. 277; but reluctantly, T. v. p. 523.

§ Sulpicius Severus *Dial. de Vit. Martin.* (About A.D. 400.)

We may thus see more clearly why no command is laid upon Christians on this subject; for it could not have been generally imposed without cruelty, or without causing mischievous results. Not, however, on that account is fasting to be treated as a matter of trivial importance. It was combined with earnest prayer in certain cases of peculiar solemnity in the apostolic church;\* and the Lord said, with reference to a demoniac of peculiarly terrific character, whom His disciples were unable to relieve, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."† The language of the apostle to the Corinthians,‡ implies that such a combination of means of grace might be frequently desirable.

It must be admitted that a pampered body restrains the workings of the mind, and draws down the soul to low and grovelling ways. A true Christian can never live in reckless self indulgence; he "keeps under his body, and brings it into subjection,"§ in the habitual exercise of such abstinence, as will permit him to "obey the godly motions of the Spirit," in righteousness and holiness of life, and thus hold on his way rejoicingly to his heavenly home. At the same time, no well instructed man ever yet "hated his own flesh,"|| as the Platonist and ascetic (in every age) have been

\* Acts xiii. 2, 3; xiv. 23.

† Matt. xvii. 21.

‡ 1 Cor. vii. 5. The fastings, mentioned 2 Cor. vi. 5; xi. 27; can scarcely have been voluntary or devotional, as they *seem* to be classed amongst sufferings and trials.

§ 1 Cor. ix. 27. Cf. Rom. viii. 13.

|| Eph. v. 29.

taught to do,\* nor regarded it as "the source of all impediments to virtue and wisdom."† He is assured, on the contrary, that it ought to be maintained, as far as possible by him in health and vigor, for the active service of his Creator. Rutherford said wisely to his friend: "remember you are in the body, and it is the lodging house, and you may not without offending the Lord suffer the old walls of this house to fall down for want of necessary food. Your body is the dwelling house of the Spirit, and therefore, for the love you carry to this sweet guest, give a due regard to His house of clay."‡ In vigorous health you may work energetically for the good of your neighbours, and more distinctly set forth the divine glory; in weakness and infirmity of body, superinduced by your own negligence, you would be at once a burden to yourselves, and a snare, or occasion of reproach to the world, and probably useless to all.

\* See Plato Phædon, cited by Clement A. Strom iii., 3 § 17, 18. "The soul of the philosopher slights his body, and flees from it as much as possible," &c. The Alexandrian compares this with Rom. vii. 20.

† Philo de Gigant § 7. He says that when the soul is initiated into the mysteries of the Lord, it regards the body as evil and hostile. He even represents (in his fanciful manner) the book of Exodus as a (symbolical) description of the *departure* of the soul from the dominion of the body, and the Passover as its purification from bodily affections or irrational emotions, and its transition from ignorance and vice to prudence and virtue, and therefore a season of real joy. Leg. Alleg. l. 3, § 22; de Migr. Abr. § 3; de Sept. § 18; de Cong. Erud. Grat. § 19; Leg. Alleg. l. 3, § 57; 60; 77, &c.

‡ Niebuhr justly regards the charge of physical well-being as equally interesting in the cause of humanity and morality.

## PART III. § 10.

3. The apostle testifies that "the love of money is the root of all evil;"\* and this was the secret, besetting sin both of the Scribes and Pharisees, in the gratification of which they had lowered the requirements of the law to their own wretched level, the more perfectly to justify themselves before men;† whilst they anxiously sought by ostentatious liberality in almsgiving, by the frequency of their devotions, and by public fasts, to attract the greater notice, or to win the more entire confidence of the people, and thus "devoured widows' houses."‡ Indeed, they ventured openly to deride the Lord, when He warned His disciples on another occasion of the impossibility of combining the service of God and Mammon.§ The parable of Lazarus specially refers to their state of mind, in a way of solemn warning. The concluding sentence, "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead,"|| shows how clearly and unequivocally their conduct and spirit were condemned by

\* 1 Tim. vi. 10. Plato said, it is impossible for those who are very rich to be likewise good. Clemens A. Strom. ii. 5, 22. Celsus foolishly pretended that the apostle borrowed and perverted the philosopher's axiom; as if it was alleged as something new. Bion had previously said, that the love of money is the metropolis of all iniquity. Diogenes had a similar apophthegm. Diog. Laert. vi. 50; Stobæus Serm. 8; Chrysost. T. iv. p. 46; T. vii. p. 565.

† Luke xvi. 15.

‡ Ib. xx. 47.

§ Ib. xvi. 13, 14.

|| Ib. ver. 31.

that written testimony.\* Our Lord, therefore, here points out the root of their vainglorious efforts, the better to instruct and to warn His disciples; since those were not simply wrong in themselves, but were also proofs of that deeper alienation of their hearts from God, in which they originated.

*“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is THE † darkness! No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.”* (v. 19—24.)

Philosophers had anxiously considered what was “the chief good of man,” and variously answered the question, according to the degree of approximation, which they had made to the discovery of the truth;‡

\* Psalm xlix.; Job xxxi.; Deut. viii. 10, 11; xxxii. 15, &c.

† Not “that,” as in our Version. See Campbell’s note. Trench p. 288.

‡ Philo concurs with the Stoics in representing τὸ ἀλόγῳ as alone good. De Post. Cain § 39; Quod Det. Pot. Insid. § 4.

since the good and the true are necessarily inseparable. It is the glory of divine revelation to cut the tangled knot of endless perplexities, and of elaborate discussion, by the sword of the Spirit, and to answer every question of practical importance in a clear and satisfactory manner. No permanent happiness can be found in shadows and illusions. The creature, severed from the Creator, or viewed independently of Him, must ever prove to be "vanity and vexation of spirit;" as everything earthly or human is alike precarious and transient, liable to "inward decay," or exposed to "outward hazards," and under any circumstances incapable of satisfying immortal spirits,\* or of being retained here by strangers and pilgrims.† Man was "created to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." We must not, therefore, aspire to a human, but to a divine reward; not to an earthly, but to a heavenly inheritance; not to the favor of man, or the possession of wealth, but to the favor of God.‡ This is "the one thing needful;"§ a sure, as well as an abiding, *portion*.||

In the parallel passage of St. Luke, spoken on a different occasion, after exhorting His disciples to cast

\* See the admonitions of Jeremiah ix. 23, 24.

† See Levit. xxv. 23; Gen. xlvii. 9; Exod. vi. 4; 1 Chron. xxix. 15; Psalm cxix. 19; 54; Psalm xxxix. 12; Heb. xi. 9—16; xiii. 14; 1 Peter ii. 11.

‡ See Philo de Mut. Nom. § 4.

§ Luke x. 42. See Psalm lxiii. 3; xxxvii. 4.

|| See Psalm lxxiii. 26; cxix. 57; cxlii. 5, &c.

away all anxiety about temporal things,\* and all fearful apprehensions, Jesus assured them that it was "the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom,"† which He had enjoined them *to seek*;‡ and then commanded them to sell their possessions and give alms, and (thus) provide themselves treasure in heaven.§ Chrysostom similarly explains the present context, as if the Lord resumed the exhortations in the fifth chapter,|| and thus enforced them by warning us, that we cannot retain our money, even if we refuse to distribute it, whereas, if we give to the needy, we really accumulate the best treasure. But the scope of this passage seems to be more full and comprehensive. Aim at a heavenly recompense;¶ for whatever you choose as your portion, or seek as your treasure, will engross your affections, and consequently regulate your conduct; and if you really seek the favor of God above all things, you will look down with disdain upon the vain honours of the

\* Luke xii. 22—30.

† Luke xii. 32.

‡ Ib. ver. 31.

§ Ib. ver. 33. Similar is the command addressed to the rich youth, Matt. xix. 21; Mark x. 21; Luke xviii. 22. See note on p. 4. Chrysostom says, men are to collect treasure by their righteousness; T. vi. p. 669; putting works in the place of Christ.

|| Gradually rising to this grander principle from the declarations in chap. v. 7; 25; 40. Op. T. vii. p. 209, 210. Cf. T. viii. p. 47, 48.

¶ God calls Himself "the shield and exceeding great reward of Abraham." Gen. xv. 1. He will be ours also. Cf. Psalm lxxxiv. 11; Gal. iii. 9.

world, in calm superiority to its corroding cares, as those whose hearts are in heaven.\*

Unhappily, however, we are no less inclined to "forsake the fountain of living waters," and "the Sun of Righteousness," and to "walk in the sparks of our own kindling,"† or laboriously to "hew out broken cisterns that can hold no water,"‡ than were the Jews and Pharisees of old. When riches increase, we are still tempted to set our affections upon them, or to glory in them, as if they were something great in themselves; or, on the contrary, when overtaken by poverty, embarrassed by difficulties, or disappointed in our worldly prospects, to murmur and repine. How many are "rising up early and late taking rest," with no other object in view than the accumulation of wealth, from which they may be suddenly torn away by the hand of death, or which by some unforeseen contingency, and unsuccessful speculation, may be scattered from them in a moment.§

\* Paul not only encourages the disciples by the prospect of future glory, but by reference to the magnitude of the blessings already bestowed upon us, such as the gift of the only Begotten Son of God. All trials and calamities are counted mercies and privileges. Rom. viii. 32; v. 1—3. Chrysost. T. v. p. 205, 206. This is the lesson of vigorous faith.

† Isaiah l. 11.

‡ Jerem. ii. 12, 13.

§ Psalm xlix. 16, 17; 1 Tim. vi. 7; Psalm xxxix. 6. The rich youth in the Gospel was put to the test by the command above mentioned. He could not obey it, because his eye was not single, nor his heart really given to the Lord. He had hoped to serve God and Mammon together.



Many, moreover, acknowledge the excellence of spiritual things, who really care nothing about them, standing aloof like the men of Meroz, when called upon to act, and rapidly sinking into a lukewarm or careless state, like the Laodiceans, whatever may be their professions, because "entangled in the affairs of this life," and drawn aside by its vanities. A new thing allures; personal influences may prevail in some degree, even with a Herod; the attractions of true piety, the charm of Christian resignation under suffering, the peace of a dying saint, or his expressions of triumphant confidence commend themselves to the imagination, and to the intellect. Striking events in the course of divine Providence, or even the inherent powers of the word, may make deep impressions in those times of peculiar susceptibility, which probably occur more or less frequently in the experience of every individual. But "an arrow can reach no higher than the impulse first given to it will carry it;" something more is needed, for "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."\* To give man a right direction and carry him forwards, in the way to heaven, there must be an attraction stronger than the force of that opposing gravitation, which draws all down to the earth. Joshua and his colleagues, the good Jehoida, the earnest apostle, the Christian statesman, the watchful parent, die;† other

\* Rom. viii. 7.

† See Josh. xxiv.; Judges ii.; 2 Chron. xxv. 2, &c.

influences come into play in rapid succession ; declension or apostasy ensues. The man's treasure was not really in heaven, and therefore his heart was not there ; he had looked from a distance upon the fountain of living waters ; but had never enjoyed it in actual experience.

Nothing, however, less than this will prove to be of any avail. The visions of pure faith and of divine love, in the power of the Holy Spirit, can alone impart abiding joy, or enrich the soul. The heroic energy of Paul, when Demas forsook him from love to this present world, and when others looked coldly on, or trembled at the lion's war, was based on no vague or mystical faith in the invisible, or in an ideal world, the creation of his own fancy, or the reflection of his own mind, but in a lively apprehension of the truth, miraculously attested by a gracious Saviour, at which philosophers scoffed, in their proud ignorance, as a thing simply incredible. For this won his whole heart, or concentrated his affections on things above, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, "the unsearchable riches" of an ascended Christ, incapable alike of decay and of injury, the source of his life, the object of his joy ! With like faith, and with a measure of the same energy, the Hebrew converts in general submitted without a murmur to worldly losses ; since they similarly realised "an enduring substance," a heavenly inheritance, as their eternal portion in Christ.\*

\* Heb. x. 34.

If it be so with us, we shall neither perform our religious duties in a vainglorious spirit, nor indulge in that covetousness\* and idolatry of wealth, to which men are naturally so prone, nor attempt to combine the service of religion and of the world. For "our eye being single, our whole body will be full of light," and we shall discern external objects in their real colours.

The force of this illustration, which recurs in a different connection in St. Luke,† has been somewhat obscured by a slight inaccuracy in our version. It should be, "the lamp of the body is the eye;"‡ that is, the eye is the source of light to the body, or the medium through which that is received, so that when it is free from imperfection or disease,§ the external world is seen in all its majesty and glory, and all the enjoyments arising from such a vision are distinctly apprehended, and the whole body is enabled to exercise its functions aright. On the contrary, whenever the eye is distorted, or injured, or smitten with blindness,|| all inlets of light are sealed up, and the whole is enveloped in the gloom of darkness. And then, if no rays from the lamp can penetrate within, or if those which seem to penetrate

\* See Luke xii. 15; Coloss. iii. 5, (*την πλεονεξίαν*.) Philo says that the prohibition to make idols intimates the sin of the covetous, who ascribe divine honours to silver and gold, which he compares to shadows and phantoms. De Mon. i. 12.

† Luke xi. 34—36.

‡ As Campbell renders.

§ "Single." Campbell reads "sound."

|| "Evil," or "distempered." Campbell.

are black and darkened, *the* darkness is indeed hopelessly excessive.

According to the ordinary usage of the Hebrews, the term "heart" frequently signifies the mind, reason, or intelligence, which is familiarly called "the eye of the soul."\*

The apostle defines the leading characteristics of the world and the church by reference to the prevalent tendencies of their respective minds.† "They which are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit; for to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Those who "mind earthly things" are elsewhere declared to be the "enemies of the cross of Christ;"‡ but the spiritual man "discerns all things," and "has the mind of Christ."§

If, then, the heart, or the seat of intelligence|| is

\* In Prov. xx. 27, the spirit of a man is called the candle or lamp of the Lord.

† Romans viii. 5, 6.

‡ Phil. iii. 18, 19.

§ 1 Cor. ii. 15, 16. "Let this *mind* be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Phil. ii. 5.

|| Chrysostom (adopting the ideas of Philo) compares the mind to a charioteer or pilot. If either of these were absent, the horses would rush precipitately along, and dash the chariot to pieces, or the waves would toss the bark about in their uncontrolled fury, until it foundered through their violence, or was dashed against the rocks. Again, if the pilot be drowned, the lamp extinguished, or the general taken captive, what hope remains for those who relied upon them? Op. T. vii. p. 212.

simple, clear, and guileless, emancipated by the power of the Holy Ghost from delusions, and from all those moist and capricious humours, which, according to Heraditus, here obscure or quench "the dry light," in which every truth and excellence is apprehended; or, if it minds and lovingly contemplates things heavenly, intent upon the favor and glory of God, the whole soul is full of light. It can estimate all things aright, because it sees them in the light of God. The choice is decided, the purpose fixed, the passions under strict control, the affections pure and heavenly, and the walk steady and consistent. Alms are distributed in a liberal and disinterested manner; prayer becomes fervent and importunate; and fasts, when necessary, are at once self-denying and exemplary.\* On the contrary, if the mind is "alienated from the life of God," perverted and ensnared by prejudice and passion, or blinded by vain-glory and unbelief, or by worldly desires,† everything is seen in a false light, or invested in false colours. Men "stumble at noon-day as in the night,"‡ or weary themselves in the pursuit of an object, which either eludes their grasp amidst the shadows which shroud them, or is found upon trial to be utterly worthless. They may whisper false peace to themselves, and

\* Such are "the children of light."

† Nothing so grieves and obscures the eye of the soul as a multiplicity of worldly cares and a crowd of desires. Chrysost. T. vii. p. 17.

‡ Isaiah lix. 10.

perform their religious duties with earnest zeal, but they have no other portion than a poor earthly inheritance, or the empty praise of their fellows. Instead of regulating and correcting the illusive reports of the senses, and the natural appetites and passions, so *blind and precipitate in themselves*, "the darkness" which was to have been illuminated,\* their mind not only multiplies and confirms the first, by substituting "bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter,"† or confounding things essentially different, but leaves the others "to work their own blind will," and to enslave and bewilder the soul more completely, until this becomes the hopeless prey to evil under the guise of good, in utter insensibility to its danger.

Many, however, are now glorying in their inner light, like the mystics of old, as if their reason was an inspiration from above, which nothing can delude, and which can itself furnish a sufficient test of the credibility of an external revelation! But unenlightened from without, it is but a smouldering lamp, bewildering instead of directing.‡ The thousand variations in the creeds of philosophers in successive ages, all equally dogmatical, all equally in their day the idols of admiring

\* See Campbell and Trench p. 287—289. Augustine referred "the eye" to the intention, with which our works are performed, and "the body" to those works themselves! Others represent "the eye" as symbolical of "the conscience."

† Isaiah v. 20.

‡ Quod enim mavult homo verum esse, id potius credit. *Bacon* Nov. Org. l. i. § 49.

disciples, all equally destined to fall into oblivion or contempt, must suffice to prove this, and to refute the gross error of these proud boasters.

Nor let any vainly suppose that any compromise is really possible between light and darkness,\* or truth and error, and the service of the flesh and of the Spirit. We cannot really have treasure in heaven and in earth at the same time. Whatever the world may suppose, piety and covetousness are as absolutely incompatible with each other, as the simultaneous pursuit of two directly opposite courses. The mind must be fixed on one determinate object, or it will never make any real progress, or attain to any measure of success. "A double minded man is (necessarily) unstable in all his ways."† Under the influence of two opposing principles, or counteracting motives at the same time, he revolves in a weary circle, or more or less eccentric course, ever returning upon itself, instead of pressing forward in the straight way of the Lord.

Neutrality, even in political affairs, has often been regarded as highly culpable, as an indication of great weakness, or of shameful apathy and indifference to the common weal. Every man is bound to exercise his faculties, to investigate the subject before him carefully, and, having chosen his part, to act upon his choice with energy and decision. In religion, there can be no middle course; it must either be of paramount interest

\* See 2 Cor. vi. 14.

† James i. 8.

and importance to us, or it will be of none, whatever we may delusively imagine. For where God is not the supreme object of our affection, He must be really unknown or wilfully disregarded. The very thought of a compromise is high treason against His Majesty. His whole law must be observed; the whole heart devoted to His service, and the entire will gained over;\* for we can have no other God† besides Him. The attempt to “serve two Masters” must still (as the Lord declares) invariably fail; for either the man “will hate the one and love the other, or (at least) he will hold to one‡ and despise the other,” so that he cannot possibly either merit or receive the favors and rewards of both at once. He that is not with Christ is against§ Him.

The desperate blindness and natural depravity of man are in nothing more strikingly exhibited than in the various subterfuges, by which he attempts to escape from this conclusion.|| Even the ungodly know that to abandon themselves to sin without restraint would

\* See Judges v. 2; 9.

† Exodus xx. 3; Deut. v. 7.

‡ That is, either one; for there is no article in the Greek here. Augustine not only overlooks this, but limits to God and Satan what is said generally, and refers to profession what belongs to the actual state of a deceitful heart. But Trench calls his remark subtle! p. 289, 290.

§ Matt. xii. 30.

|| An ironical statement in the book of Ecclesiastes vii. 16, has often been practically opposed to the clear rule before us, by men determined to delude themselves.



defeat their own purpose, and entail present ruin upon them; and more especially under the influence of covetousness they will often exercise strict control over themselves\* in other particulars, with self-denying earnestness. But then such men flatter themselves, that it would be alike foolish and prejudicial to be *decidedly* religious, and that strictness and precision in conduct must be evil and unnecessary, because fatal to their worldly prospects, or to the special object of their cherished desire, whilst they vainly hope to enjoy security in a middle course.

It is obvious that none can receive the inheritance, who keep back part of the price. An Achan in the camp caused the curse of God to rest upon it; a single cherished sin entails wrath upon the professor; it is a rejection of the authority of the Lawgiver;† it brings him in guilty of contempt, yea, of dissembled hatred! Let not any, therefore, rashly engage in a profession, of which he has not "counted the cost." It is not the will of God that we should do so. He would have us remember, as Rutherford says, that "Christ is not easily gotten nor kept;" for the heart is very treacherous and deceitful; the world abounds with snares adapted to every disposition, and Satan has his wiles, by which

\* The soul is not capable of cherishing, or entertaining many desires at once, but one mars the other, and the dominion of one by absorbing the whole man enfeebles the other. Chrysost. T. viii. p. 13. Cf. Plato Phædon p. 69.

† James ii. 10, 11.

we may be deceived at any stage of our Christian experience. "Ye *cannot* serve the Lord; for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."\* Thus Joshua of old warned Israel, not to discourage them, but to lead them to pause and consider, before they engaged in a profession, which almighty grace alone could enable them to maintain. "It is Christianity to be sincere, honest, unfeigned and upright-hearted before God, and to live and serve Him, suppose that there was not one man, nor woman in all the world dwelling beside to eye you." Are we prepared for this? What men often mistake for conversion, temporary excitement, deep feeling, and joyful raptures succeeding great distress on account of our sins, will not suffice. We "must be born again." An Almighty Hand must mould us anew; and an Eternal Spirit must take up His abode in our hearts, and shed abroad the love of God there, to stimulate, sanctify, and regulate our affections. For "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" or, as Philo is reported to have said,† it is as impossible for love to the world and to God to co-exist, as for light and darkness to be combined. Decision, therefore, is absolutely essential, as it was pressed upon Israel by Moses, and yet more emphatically by Elijah, in a time of general apostasy;‡ that we

\* Josh. xxiv. 19. Compare Luke xiv. 25—33.

† Fragm p. 649.

‡ Deut. xxx. 19, 20; 1 Kings xviii. 20, 21.

may obey the simple force of attraction to the centre of light and life, to which we shall then continually approximate, as we eagerly anticipate the happy moment of union with Christ in a holier state.

If Mammon, or wealth with all its uncertain and deceitful properties, be a satisfying portion for time and for eternity, let us go on without cessation labouring to replenish our coffers, and "lade ourselves with thick clay," and thus heap up "treasures upon earth." We shall have many to sympathise with us in such efforts, for Mammon is the grand idol of Britain. Its name is emblazoned on her banners in every part of the world; and the unscrupulous but earnest struggles, which its service demands, lie at the root of much of the drunkenness, profligacy, and squalid misery, which cause such searchings of heart, and gloomy apprehensions in every serious observer; as they prompt its votaries to seek gain at any hazard, in perfect indifference to every holy principle. But if we tremble, not only on account of the Lord's warning, but, yet farther, on account of our own experience of the characteristic evils of the prohibited course, or if we are thoroughly convinced, as the view of Christ in His grace and glory cannot fail to convince every spiritual man, that we should not be profited at all by the gain of the whole world, however exalted our position, or extended our possessions, or refined our pleasures, if our soul should perish at the last, excluded from the favor of Jehovah and deprived through our own negligence and folly

of heavenly treasures, let us at once renounce the service of Mammon, and the love of the world, and devote ourselves unreservedly to that service of a Father in heaven, which is "perfect freedom."\*

Every true believer is betrothed to Christ by His grace, and thus sweetly assured of "His pre-eminence in all things." How, then, can he dally with other suitors,† or expect happiness in the smiles of the creature? Rutherford strikingly exclaimed, "I want nothing but a further revelation of the beauty of the Son of God. His love is a mystery to the world. I could not have believed that there was so much in Christ as there is. It is little to see Christ in a book as men do the world in a card;—but to come nigh Him, and clasp and embrace Him is another thing." None who do this shall ever be disappointed.‡ He is to them "as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."§ No evil can befall them. For if He ministers to them

\* Even Philo says that virtue should be honoured for its own sake, and that the true or faithful service of God is the best enjoyment and highest glory of man, far surpassing all external blessings, as at once sweet and glorious in itself. *Leg. Alleg.* l. 3 § 58; *de Somn.* ii. 15; *de Profug.* § 31; *Quæst in Exod.* l. 2 § 15, &c. To be left alone by Him is worse than punishment. *Quod Det. Pot. Insid.* § 39, 40. (See *Hosea* iv. 17.)

† See 2 Cor. xi. 2; Psalm xlv. 10, 11; 2 Chron. xix. 2; James iv. 4.

‡ See Psalm ix. 8, 9, &c.

§ *Isaiah* xxxii. 2.

a cup of bitterness at any time,\* He never fails to mingle some rich spices of consolation with it, that the bitterness may pass away, and only the comfort remain.

## § 11.

*“Therefore I say unto you, take no thought† for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls‡ of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better§ than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?|| And*

\* “A tree was cut down, and the waters of Marah were sweetened; and one drop of the love of God will sweeten the bitterest cup. The more we lose, if we have God, the richer we grow; for He only takes away other things to make more room for Himself, and give Himself a new welcome.” Howels.

† Rather, “be not anxious about your life.” Campbell.

‡ “Ravens,” in Luke xii. 24. See 1 Kings xvii. 4—6; Psalm cxlvii. 9; Job xxxviii. 41.

§ Rather, “do not ye much excel them?” or, as Campbell renders, “are ye not much more valuable than they?”

|| Campbell renders, “besides; which of you can by his anxiety prolong his life one hour?” See his note on Luke xii. 25. The original seems to admit of this interpretation, which is evidently far more natural, and harmonises far better with the context than the Authorised Version; though not known to Chrysostom, nor perceived (I believe) by any of the ancients. Increase of stature is seldom an object of desire, and a cubit in height is not a small, but a very

*why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?\** Therefore take no thought,† saying, what shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you.

“Take therefore no thought‡ for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (v. 25—34.)

The disciples had been already taught to pray “day by day” for their “daily bread:” the reason for adding no more is here stated in detail. The heathen hope to be heard for their much speaking; they seek primarily for earthly things; but it must not be so with those

considerable addition. Compare Trench p. 290, 291. If “we live and move and have our being in God,” He will assuredly not withhold from us those lesser things, which are essential to life. We have no control over the greater, why be *careful* about the less? Anxiety is not only sinful, but utterly fruitless.

\* Rather, ye distrustful. Campbell.

† “Say not anxiously.” Campbell.

‡ Id.

who look up unto God as a reconciled Father, rejoicing in His unfailing Providence, who "opens His hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing."\*

Again, the thorns, which choke the good seed, in so many instances, are described as symbolical of "the care of the world and the deceitfulness of riches."† We have already considered the danger in the latter case; we are now warned against the other; for they are but different species of one rank and noxious genius, naturally luxuriating since the Fall in different soils, or perhaps even simultaneously in the same. They variously characterise the servants of Mammon, whether these are rich and covetous, or poor and anxious; constantly dissatisfied with their circumstances, in gloomy apprehensions for the future, or ever grasping at something more. Wealth, indeed, is commonly sought as a security against anxiety, as a desirable resting place, or as a source of abiding comfort. But the old proverb is continually verified in the experience of those who set their hearts upon its acquisition. The desire increases with its gratification, so that these men only change the nature of their cares by the course which they pursue, however successfully. Jesus, therefore, here strikes at the root of the moral disease, and lays down a principle sufficient to cheer and animate His disciples at all times.‡

\* Psalm cxlv. 16; civ. 27, 28, &c.

† Matt. xiii. 22.

‡ There is the same connection in Luke xii. 13—31.

They had no "goods laid up in store for many years," either in corn, or in garments, or in metal; the usual occupation of the fishermen amongst them was necessarily very precarious in its results;\* and they would probably be brought into situations of greater difficulty and hazard in the exercise of their ministry. It was especially necessary for them to live without anxiety about temporal things, that they might serve their Lord, and execute His commission, without the least *distraction*. They are, therefore, exhorted to rely with undeviating confidence upon the good Providence of a Heavenly Father.†

This was no new doctrine. Aratus, the heathen poet, recognised our relationship to God, as "His offspring;" ‡ and the fact, that God unceasingly rules the world, was distinctly asserted by Plato § and his school. Atticus represented belief in divine Providence, as tending in the greatest and most essential degree to human happiness.¶ It is obvious that piety has no foundation, where it is denied.¶ Its certainty is the

\* See Luke v. 5.

† Paul declares his own experience, Phil. iv. 11, 12, for our special guidance and encouragement.

‡ Acts xvii. 28; Euseb. Præp. Evang. l. 13, c. 13. Such a relationship seems necessarily to involve a claim for support and protection. Cf. Philo de Mund. Opif. § 2.

§ De Leg. l. 10, c. 10. Euseb. Præp. Evang. l. 12, c. 52.

¶ A Platonist, cited by Euseb. Præp. Evang. l. 15, c. 5.

¶ Philo de Mund. Opif. § 2.



subject of an interesting treatise by the Alexandrian Jew;\* and the Christian has no room to doubt.

Jehovah must provide for His creatures; for if He withdrew His hand and watchful superintendence for a single moment, all would be confusion, misery and desolation. He promises no superfluities in the Gospel, but food and raiment; not peculiar delicacies or rare comforts, but a sufficiency of all that is really necessary. The Psalmist rejoiced continually in His care, and lacked nothing;† and his sweet declarations and uniform experience are recorded for our encouragement. “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.‡ I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.”§ The promise in Isaiah is no less explicit; “bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure.”||

The disciples of Jesus shall be no less abundantly

\* In Lib. i. § 42, (ed. Aucher p. 21,) he says, anticipating Paley, “opus si quidem ipsum evidenter demonstrat factorem, quamvis is minime assit. Ecce ex materia ærea elegans artis peritus artificiosam machinam sollerte ingenio perficiens instrumentum tempora discriminans dabat civitati, ut temporum quantitatem per mensuras divisionis distributam præstaret iis, qui vellent assequi plenam notitiam ejus rei,” &c. (From the Armenian.)

† Psalm xxiii. 1.

‡ Psalm xxxiv. 10. Cf. Psalm civ. 21, 22; and see Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

§ Psalm xxxvii. 25.

|| Isaiah xxxiii. 16.

provided for. Let them consider the inferior creatures, if they have any doubt. The fowls of the air have no anxiety, seed time or harvest; but their wants are all supplied by an Almighty Hand. The flower neither toils nor spins; yet it flourishes in rare beauty, though it is but for a day; when it withers away, and is cast into the oven. And shall *man* be forgotten? Was he not created in the divine image? True, he is but a wreck of what he once was; but is he not still the object of divine love and infinite compassion? \* The Gospel distinctly exhibits his preciousness in the sight of a beneficent Creator. † Those who have received this into their hearts through faith, in the light and power of His Spirit, well know the mercy which irradiates His kingdom upon earth, and the joyful privileges of that service, into which they have willingly entered, and which they now heartily accomplish, and the glory to which they are called, of which their regeneration is at once the earnest and the seal. Their souls are "bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord;" ‡ their

\* Psalm xxxvi. 6; 1 Tim. iv. 10. God *gave* deliverance (or victory) to idolatrous Syrians by Naaman. 2 Kings v. 1. See also Jonah iv. 10, 11.

† How graciously had Jesus fed the multitudes in the wilderness, though these anxious hearers had no knowledge of His real character. Matt. xiv. 14—21; xv. 32—38, &c.; John vi. 1—27. The recollection of these miracles should have encouraged the disciples never to fear, or to distrust the Providence of their Master. See Matt. xvi. 5—11.

‡ See 1 Sam. xxv. 29, with Coloss. iii. 3, 4.

bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost; but not one of the most insignificant birds is "*forgotten* before God;"\* and they at least must be fully aware of their vastly superior importance. Then, let them "cast all their care upon Him," and banish every distrustful apprehension and uneasy thought, as alike impertinent and dishonourable to Him, who unceasingly "cares for them;"† for "the world is His, and the fulness thereof."‡

Another striking lesson seems opened out to us in this passage. We believe, at least, that Jesus intended far more than simple illustrations of one spiritual truth by reference to the external world. Men have frequently erred in points of religion, not only from want of acquaintance with the Scriptures, but also from ignorance of the power of God.§ The books of nature and of revelation are, therefore, both set before us by their gracious Author for diligent and methodical study. We cannot neglect either, without suffering loss, and doing dishonour to His Name. Gloomy fanatics, who tinge every object they survey with the colour of their own unhappy disposition, have told us that a Christian should look with indifference upon the wonders, which crowd around him on every side, and that it would be sinful for him to admire them, because there is now a curse

\* Luke xii. 6.

† 1 Peter v. 7.

‡ Psalm l. 12; 1 Cor. x. 26; 28.

§ See Matt. xxii. 29, as applied by Lord Bacon.

upon the earth, and "the creature is subject to vanity," mutable and perishing; but we *dare* not listen to them. Natural beauty is not set before us to mock and tantalise us, nor yet to ensnare our souls, but graciously designed to raise our thoughts to a more just and cheering view of the character of the Creator; "whose glory the heavens declare," so impressively, and whose marvellous condescension, in stooping from that "canopy of fretted gold" to visit a fallen race, is greatly enhanced to our minds, as our imagination soars on the wings of science, through regions of incalculable immensity, amidst orbs of countless multitude, each probably larger and more glorious than our sun! The Psalmist had no conception of these; and yet he regarded what he beheld with wonder and spiritual profit, and teaches us that the works of God in general are "sought out," or diligently scanned, by all who delight in Him.\* Then let us study nature, that we may learn by the exercise of reason in its investigation to give to faith more readily the things that appertain to her province, and to rely with increasing confidence at all times upon Him, whose everlasting strength and unsearchable wisdom shine forth so conspicuously in all His works.†

The prophet Isaiah specially exhorted the Israelites in a day of perplexity to lift up their eyes on high, and contemplate the order of the heavenly host, remembering

\* See Psalm xix. 1; viii. 3, 4; cxi. 2, (in Boothroyd's Version.)

† See Rom. i. 20.

that He calleth them all by their names, that he might thus encourage them by the assurance, that the arms of power, and the wisdom of counsel, there exhibited, should be continually exerted on behalf of the weak and trembling believer, still nursed in His bosom of love, and tenderly cared for, though apparently forsaken.\*

Solomon was endowed with special wisdom, or "largeness of heart, even as the sand on the sea shore;" nor was this ill employed in investigating, and even in writing in detail upon trees and plants, beasts and fowls, reptiles and fishes.† How, then, can we err in recommending the study of natural history in all its branches,‡ as alike invigorating to the mind,§ and calculated to enlarge our views of the glorious Perfections of Jehovah, as reflected in this mirror? The comparative innocence, and artless simplicity of childhood, cannot be more effectually preserved than in the indulgence of a pursuit, which brings such

\* Isaiah xl. 26, &c. A similar train of thought occurs in Psalm cxlvii. 2—5.

† 1 Kings iv. 29; 33, 34. Moses was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." Acts vii. 22.

‡ Chrysostom very earnestly recommends the study of nature. T. iii. p. 125, 126, (on Psalm ix.); 895—899; (see Psalm civ. 24.) T. iv. p. 149—151. See a striking description of a rural scene. T. viii. p. 495.

§ As one well says, "it calls into play the moral faculties of patience, courage, and self-denial, and demands accurate observation and careful comparison, and will scarcely suffer the student to rest satisfied without entering upon the wider domains of philosophical inquiry."

sacred, unalloyed and elevated pleasures in its train. The enthusiasm, therefore, with which some able men have lately advocated its importance and charms, is a cause of great thankfulness, especially to those who contrast it with the wretched system,\* morally, intellectually, and spiritually, formerly pursued in our great public schools.†

The peculiar zest, which Christian faith imparts to

\* Bacon vainly called attention to the superiority and excellence of the system pursued by the Jesuits. They, at least, are earnest teachers.

† It is an idle question whether mathematics and the classics, or the study of nature and philosophical instruction, are best calculated to discipline the human mind, unless we mean in earnest to apply the course prescribed, in a way which was not even attempted in the passing generation. Great, however, are our obligations to the late Dr. Arnold, who seems to have been the first to recognise the responsibility of his position, and to care for his pupils *individually*. But is it not preposterous to subject all youths to the same course of study, without reference to their varying capacities and tastes? Or what farmer will cultivate every kind of soil in one formal manner? A case is recorded of a youth, who appeared so remarkably obtuse, that the Jesuits were on the point of dismissing him as a hopeless blockhead, when one of their subtle and experienced teachers tried him in geometry, and thus discovered that latent power, which eventually rendered Clavius the first mathematician of his day. (Spectator No. 347.) Who seeks to discover *latent powers* in the lads in our schools or colleges? or who cares at all for the dull and obtuse boy? A blended system of instruction, (conscientiously and individually carried out,) seems to be the course required, as that would be adapted to draw out various minds, to excite a love to the good, the beautiful, and the true in all alike, and neither to cramp, nor to dissipate their native energies, by constraining any to pursuits, in which it is impossible for them to succeed, and debarring them from those congenial to them, and thus plunging them in despair.

the rambles of a naturalist, has been beautifully expressed by Mr. Gosse. "As a child roams over his father's estate, and is ever finding some quiet nook, or clear pool, or foaming waterfall, some lofty avenue, some bank of sweet flowers, some picturesque or fruitful tree, some noble and wide spread prospect,—how is the pleasure heightened by the thought, ever recurring,—all this will be mine by and by! And though he may not understand all the arrangements, nor fathom the reasons of all the work that he sees going on, he knows that all enhances the value of the estate, which in due time will be his own possession. So with the Christian. The sin-oppressed earth, *groaning and labouring* now under the pressure of the fall, is a part of the inheritance of the Lord Jesus, bought with His blood. He has paid the price of its redemption, and at the appointed time shall reign over it. But when the Lord reigneth His people shall reign too. And thus I have a right to examine with as great minuteness as I can bring to the pleasant task, consistently with other claims, what are called the works of nature. And if any despise the research as mean and little, I reply that I am scanning the plan of my inheritance. And when I find any tiny object rooted to the rock, or swimming in the sea, in which I trace with more than common measure the grace and delicacy of the Master hand, I may not only give Him praise for His skill and wisdom, but thanks also, for that He hath taken the pains to contrive, to fashion, to adorn this for me."\*

\* Rambles on the Coast of Devonshire. p. 354—356.

Their glorious Creator not only feeds all the minute animalculæ, crowded in a single drop of water, but once projected all those suns and systems into being, which each in its own appointed sphere subserves some purpose, to us inscrutable. Not one of His creatures, however insignificant, can perish without His consent; and can He for a moment forget, or overlook a single prayerful, loving child, amidst the glories of His Throne? O no: "the very hairs of our heads are all numbered; not one of them shall perish." Myriads of stars, the light of which only reaches the earth after the lapse of thousands of years, and myriads of living spawn, emanating from an individual object, alike engage His watchful superintendence. Nothing is either beneath His notice, or beyond His grasp. We have no cause, therefore, to fear, or to distress ourselves about the future in this world. If we will but cast ourselves into His arms, all that concerns our happiness for time and for eternity, however minute and trifling in itself, as a link in a chain of exquisite workmanship, shall be manifestly ordered by His love. It would indicate the most extreme weakness of faith to doubt this, with so many tokens of His gracious Providence, constantly occurring before our eyes,\* as we daily witness.

The charms of the vegetable kingdom are in this

\* Be not discouraged by the mysterious ways of His Providence. For if the ignorant cannot understand human art, how can it be possible for our intellects to unfold the wonders of the Infinite? Rom. xi. 33, 34. Chrysost. v. 799.



respect also more peculiarly interesting and instructive. It has been said that plants are mentioned in more than three hundred places in Scripture. How much instruction and delight must necessarily be lost by those, who, through ignorance, or through systematic misapprehension of the mind of God, are altogether reckless of such objects! But the Lord here says, "consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." His disciples could not be insensible to their beauty: but no labour or exertion of their own had prepared or woven that gorgeous robe. It is the gift of a Father's hand. It may perhaps seem mysterious to us, that so much care should have been lavished on a thing so perishable, on an earth so polluted as ours: but there it is; and as the Israelites gloried in the name of Solomon, their illustrious monarch, whose fame spread amongst all nations, and whose wisdom, opulence, and prosperity constituted a golden age in Israel,\* a striking type and earnest of Millennial blessedness, the Lord here declares, (contemplating His own work with delight,) that even he "in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these!"

Sir J. E. Smith identified the flower here indicated with the yellow *Amaryllis*, whose golden liliaceous flowers cover the fields of the Levant in autumn, and present "one of the most brilliant and gorgeous objects in nature." Philo speaks of white lilies, as represented in the tabernacle, and describes them as radiant with

\* 1 Kings iv. 20—34.

beauty, and symbolical of the stars, and flourishing without water, in the midst of the summer heats, or even in the dog days, when other flowers had withered or passed away;\* but these plants are said to be now unknown in Palestine. Could he have been mistaken? His account certainly adds much force to the illustration before us. All things may appear unfavourable, or even hostile, dark or threatening. The season of ordinary blessing may have passed away; the fervent heat of tribulation or persecution may oppress us; but the Lord is sufficient; and His "fresh springs" are at the hidden root. Man's extremity is His chosen opportunity to display this encouraging truth. See how rapidly, under circumstances apparently the most unfavourable, those lilies, which you behold around you, have shot up,† and their lovely flowers have come to perfection; and yet they only contribute to the gratification of your senses; they have no feeling, no mind, no immortal spirit like man. Why, then, should *we* doubt? Are we not children of the Most High? heirs "of a kingdom, which cannot be moved?" He knows all our need, and anticipates it.‡

The poor heathen, who supposed that the Godhead, if such there were, was too exalted to stoop to the

\* Quæst. in Exod. l. 2 § 76. Lilium vero fortassis tam propter candorem, quia lucidum est, stellæ vero splendores sunt, &c.

† See Hosea xiv. 5.

‡ Observe how emphatically Jesus reminds His disciples of this. Vers. 8 and 32.

consideration of sublunary affairs, or to care for man, or questioned His power, His wisdom, or His goodness, or knew not how to reconcile the existence of such attributes with what they daily witnessed, and therefore had no assurance of His Providence, naturally “walked by sight,” and, in ignorance of eternal realities, devoted themselves to the restless pursuit of temporal good, because utterly destitute of any resources beyond those, which they could find in themselves, or in the world around them. But we know God, and call Him Father. As a fond mother tends her helpless babe with anxious care, so has He graciously undertaken to tend and provide for us.\* Only let us “*first* seek His kingdom and His righteousness;”† for this is the characteristic of all that are His, to whom the promise belongs. Let our first thoughts, our most earnest wishes, our most anxious prayers correspond with the lessons, already inculcated in the devotional form, prescribed by the Lord to all who are interested in the privileges of His kingdom, and who “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Having a “single eye,” and a treasure in heaven, and yielding undivided allegiance to Jehovah, let us remember our paramount obligation, as loyal subjects, and as faithful servants, in self-sacrifice and self-oblivion, to promote whatever may tend to exalt

\* “Let your conversation be without *covetousness*; and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Heb. xiii. 5.

† That is, required by Him. Campbell. Compare Zephaniah ii. 3.

our King, and therefore above all things personally to live in righteousness and truth. As in due subordination to His will, we are taught to pray for ourselves, so are we here assured that "all these (lesser) things,"\* necessary to the comfort of the living man, "shall be added to us" by Him, who feeds the meanest of His creatures, and prodigally adorns the grass of the field.

Moses appealed to the experience of Israel under circumstances more trying and hazardous than the disciples of Jesus could anticipate. "The Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand; He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness; these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee: thou hast *lacked nothing*. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell."† The history of Elijah was yet more remarkable. At the command of Jehovah, voracious ravens first brought the prophet bread *and flesh* every morning and every evening; and then, when the brook Cherith was dried up, a poor widow, belonging to idolatrous Sidon, sustained him with a "handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse," which He would not suffer to fail, until plenty was restored to the land.‡ Truly nothing is too hard for the Lord; nothing too wonderful for Him to accomplish in behalf of His praying servants. He will

\* "Ask for great things, and the trifling shall be added." Quotation (probably paraphrastic) in Clemens A. Strom. i. 24, 158, &c.

† Deut. ii. 7; viii. 4.

‡ 1 Kings xvii. 3—16.

give them what is best for them even here, and that without prejudice to their hopes of an inheritance in heaven.

The winter, indeed, is sometimes tediously protracted; the seed has even *appeared* to be rotting in the ground, and a cold spring has subsequently seared the rising blade; and yet later thick mists have set in, and the full corn in the ear has been thought by anxious men to be perishing, when a sudden change has occurred under the influence of a genial sunshine; and a most propitious harvest and abundant crop have eventually manifested the presence and love of a God who heareth prayer. The lesson is two-fold. Let not the trembling saint ever despond, either as to time or to eternity, however distressing or unfavourable circumstances may now appear. Winter will not last for ever; the cold shall soon pass away; the very mists, which he so much dreads, may be charged with an unexpected errand of mercy.\* Only let him calmly await the result in earnest prayer. "In due season," he shall distinctly realise the blessing, and "be satisfied;" for the Israel of God "shall never be ashamed."†

Above all, let us never anticipate trouble. What we apprehend may never come. Each day has its own evil, "toil, labour, and sorrow," or brings its appointed burden. That is sufficient; let us not add to it. When

\* From notes of a Sermon, August, 1847.

† Joel ii. 26, 27.

the morrow arrives, the means of bearing its trials will come with it; but not previously. We have offered a petition for daily bread; and our Father will surely give it, according to His promise. But the manna must still be gathered fresh every morning; it can neither be laid by, nor preserved for another day. In other words, we must renew our supplications continually "day by day;" and then His all-sufficient grace will be continually vouchsafed to us, and we shall be strengthened and comforted, or relieved, as may be most expedient for us.

At the same time, none of these promises preclude the necessity of exertion and of diligent labour, in whatever station of life it may have pleased God to place us. We must never "tempt Him," by neglecting any of the ordinary means, adapted to the end which we have in view, or by slothfulness in business.\* The apostolic precept and example are alike explicit, and clearly enforce the law; "six days shalt thou labour."† What is in one sense the curse of toil‡ becomes really fraught with blessings, as in this life it is essential to the happiness of man.

\* Rom. xii. 11; Prov. xxii. 29. Cf. id. xiv. 4, &c.

† Exod. xx. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 6—12; Acts xviii. 1—3; xx. 33—35, &c. It is thus, as this instance further proves, invariably necessary to combine different Scriptures together, before we lay down any general rule, or deduce sweeping inferences from a parabolical discourse.

‡ Gen. iii. 17.

## PART IV. § 12.

4. The Pharisees not only vainly trusted in their own righteousness, and, whilst blessing the covetous whom God abhors,\* sought to justify themselves before men, reckless of the opposing judgment of the Lord,† but with bitter, hypocritical censoriousness judged and condemned others.‡ Chrysostom strangely mistakes the scope of the parable on this subject, when he says that nothing could be worse than the publican, and that it was the reproach cast upon him by the Pharisee in his prayer, which happily led him, when he heard and thought upon it, to humble himself before God, and thus enabled him to obtain mercy. For the proud man, who must be regarded as a type of his class, first blessed God on account of his freedom from the gross sins of others, and then added to his own praise, that he was not “even as this publican.” This obviously was not to *accuse* that man of any special acts of sin, but simply to regard him as an irreligious, ungodly man, who probably neither kept any fasts, nor rigidly observed the law of tithes, and *therefore to despise him*.§ Now this point seems to be one of great importance, too little considered. It sets forth the excessive pride and censoriousness of the Pharisee in the strongest light;

\* Psalm x. 3.

† Luke xvi. 14, 15.

‡ Luke xviii. 9.

§ Id. vers. 11, 12.

for he looked with disdain upon his fellow, simply because he did not come up to his particular standard, although that was at once a low and a false one.

The language of the Lord before us seems expressly designed to correct this evil. *“Judge not, that ye be not judged:\** for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam† that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam‡ is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite,§ first cast out the beam|| out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” (Chap. vii. v. 1—5.)

(1.) A poor and humble man, deeply conscious of his own shortcomings, and anxious to become pure and heavenly as His Master, can have neither leisure nor inclination to sit in judgment upon his brethren, or to thank God that he is not like them. For, in truth, he must know more evil of himself than of any other man; and he is well aware, that, although outward appearances may deceive the world, and satisfy the careless, “God

\* In St. Luke we read more emphatically; “judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.” (Chap. vi. 37.)

† Rather, the thorn. Campbell.

‡ Id.

|| Id.

§ See Luke xii. 1; above p. 187.



looks at the heart;" and there lies his burden; there rages the fatal disease under which he groans, even when conscious of divine favor. On the other hand, true "charity thinketh no evil," but "believeth all things;"\* and we must look with grave suspicion upon any system or teacher, who overlooks this, or who presumes to sneer at the possible excess, to which some may apparently carry so inoffensive and unassuming a principle. These, at least, are commonly found amongst the most amiable of men, and amongst the meekest of Christians.

Moreover the solemn warnings of the apostles prove, that censorious judgments are not only offensive to man, but to the meek and lowly Emmanuel, who "came not to judge the world, but to save the world," and who continually ate with publicans and sinners. It is, therefore, to anticipate *the time*, and to dishonour our profession, to imitate the proud sectary, who thus hoped to stand higher in the opinion of men, by criticising and censuring the faults and inconsistencies of others. The apostle James† writes with much earnestness. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law,

\* That is, it is "witty and inventive of good constructions upon anything that may clear a brother." *Leighton*. The Latin Homilist (Chrysost. Op. T. vii. p. 832,) refers the Lord's rule to sins against ourselves, not against God.

† James iv. 11, 12.

thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who art thou that judgest another?" He alone may consistently judge or condemn, who is cognisant of all secrets, and knows the internal conflicts of each spirit. "Evil speakings" cannot possibly lead to any good result, as they seem to originate in nothing but pride and bitterness of heart. St. Peter charges us utterly to renounce them,\* as he classes them with their kindred, "malice, guile, hypocrisy, and envy." Nor is St. Paul less decided. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth." He here indeed refers to a particular instance, in which judgment was erroneous; for he expressly declares that the individual judged should be upheld; as God was "able to make him stand."† But, at another time, he says generally, "judge *nothing before the time*, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God."‡ This supposes that Christians would be tempted to sit in judgment upon each other, especially in cases where they were personally aggrieved, and perhaps unchristianise each other: let all such beware. It is not for man to know the secrets of another. We are so often deceived, because we cannot look beyond "the outward appearance," and

\* 1 Peter ii. 1.

† Rom. xiv. 4.

‡ 1 Cor. iv. 5. See 1 Sam. xvi. 6, 7.

therefore at one time despise the rough diamond, because not yet polished and lustrous as it shall become, and at another unduly admire the gilded tinsel, which we mistake for solid gold. Thus the ardent zeal of one may be mere presumption; and the timid diffidence of another a deep work of the Spirit.

Assuredly the church ought not to be turned into a school for scandal, or even into a judicial court. The one would be a flagrant transgression of the law of love; the other, a profane intrusion into the prerogative of the Lord, a rash and impracticable attempt to antedate a day of righteous and irreversible decision.

A fragment has been preserved from Clement of Alexandria, in which he says, "if any man speaks evil in thy presence of another, be not ashamed to say, cease, brother; I daily sin more grievously than he; how then can I condemn him? You will thus accomplish a double good, and cure both the evil speaker and yourself."\* Leighton writes more soberly. "Thou that playest the arch-critic on all around thee, art thou without fault? Hast thou flattered thyself into such a fancy, as to think that thou art above all exception? Is there nothing, either a true or a seeming blemish for any to point at in thee? Surely there is something, some part lying open, that men may hit at thee; and

\* Quoted by Beausobre on James iv. 11. Chrysostom bids his hearer say to a reviler, if thou knewest all, thou wouldest not have merely alleged that! T. viii. p. 553. This thought occurs in Epictetus's Manual c. 33 § 9.

they will surely not miss to do it, if thou provokest them. However, remember, if thou shouldest escape all tongues, and pass free this way; yet One unavoidable searching hand thou must come under: His judgment—who sees thee to the bottom, and can charge thee with the secret sins of thy bosom. He can and will so pay thee home all thy unjust judgments of thy brethren with just judging of thy ways and thoughts, that thou thyself shall confess no wrong is done to thee.” Let us use a large *measure* of liberality and kindness, of compassion and cautious forbearance, in all cases, as we desire to receive the same, whether from God or from our fellows. For as we deal with others, so directly or indirectly will He deal with us;\* and “he shall have judgment without mercy, who has shown no mercy.”†

It is not of course unlawful to execute justice between man and man, or to discern between the good and evil,‡ or to judge actions in themselves, whether right or wrong, or decidedly to condemn the latter; but it is unlawful to pry into the hearts of others, and rashly censure “doubtful actions, though a little suspicious,” and to pronounce upon “the final estate even of the worst.”§ In the choice of associates, indeed, we must exercise more careful discrimination, that we may “walk with the wise,” the conscientious and the holy; and it may be the office of charity to warn a brother against a vicious person, whose character he dangerously

\* See Psalm xviii. 25, 26.

† James ii. 13.

‡ See below p. 286; and vers. 15—20.

§ See Leighton.

and injuriously mistakes. Gross offenders also are to be punished and restrained, or at least to be excluded from the society of the faithful.

The apostle, therefore, after prohibiting judgments in the epistle to the Corinthians, and thus laying down the *general* rule, as in other instances here enforced by the Lord, modifies this in the case of the incestuous person by a *particular* injunction. "What have I to do to judge them also that are *without*? do not ye judge them that are *within*? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."\* Discipline must be exercised; to exercise it, the church or its minister must judge; this is an exceptional case; for the offender is to be delivered to Satan, that through the sufferings of his flesh his spirit may be saved;† but exceptional cases must not be extended beyond the plain limits, which the circumstances, under which they occur, will enable us to ascertain.

Overt acts alone are in question, about which there could be no doubt;‡ but it would be a very different thing to discuss the motives and principles of our brethren, to view their faults and inconsistencies, as if inspecting the leprosy of a material house, under the law, or "through a magnifying and a multiplying glass," and to attempt to discriminate between the casual out-breakings of evil, and the deliberate love

\* 1 Cor. v. 12, 13, with verse 3.

† *Ib.* verse 4, 5. See xi. 32.

‡ *Id.* v. 11.

of sin. That case proceeded upon the supposition that the transgressor was a brother; *the power to judge, whether he were really one or not*, or to discern the existence or absence of leprosy, is neither granted nor assumed. There is nothing, then, here to justify a presumptuous effort to determine the state of another's heart, before we admit him to church fellowship, or to pull out the tares from *the wheat field*, or to discriminate between the good and the bad fish, when still inclosed in the same net. Whatever we may desire or attempt, the words of the New Testament on this point are evidently restrictive, and seem clearly to condemn every human anticipation of the Lord's unerring decision. For even if the Pharisee had been a good man, the contemptuous manner in which he referred to the Publican who seemed not to be so, at the very moment when the object of his censure was exercising penitence and faith in the temple, which he was thought to profane, would have been evil and unholy.

The examination of Adam and Eve after the fall, and the solemn language of Jehovah, with reference even to the cities of the plain, "I will go down, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know,"\* seem to be recorded for our special instruction, to convince us of the necessity of accurately investigating the circumstances of the case, before we "take up a

\* Gen. xviii. 21.

reproach against our neighbour,"\* or venture to condemn him.† But how seldom is such an investigation really possible.

(2.) The judgments, however, of the Pharisees were not honest, but merely hypocritical cloaks of cherished sin. Sharp-sighted in detecting the lesser faults of others, they overlooked their own graver offences, and therefore could not possibly do good by their officiousness and readiness to censure their brethren. Had they been really zealous for the glory of God, and the suppression of vice, they would have begun with their own hearts, and so "cleared their own eyes as to discern aright;"‡ for "the most suitable and pertinent reproofs," as well as "the most piercing and powerful," are those dictated by a holy and consistent life. This alone can ever stimulate others to repentance, or to love and to good works.

Hence when the apostle reproved the Corinthians for the irreverence and profane disorder, with which they had solemnised the Lord's supper, and which had exposed them to the wrath of God, he did not exhort them to admonish or to censure one another, as in the case of the incestuous man, but diligently to prove and examine *themselves*. This is that "happy and gainful

\* Psalm xv. 3, shows how evil such conduct is.

† Chrysost. T. ii. p. 172, &c. Truth and hypocrisy are not easily distinguished; for what has a real existence is frequently thrown into the shade, or surpassed by mere appearances. Philo de Profug. § 27.

‡ Leighton. See above Chap. vi. 22.

severity," which cannot be too frequently exercised; for "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" of the Lord.\* It is impossible to be too candid and mild in reference to others; but we should "sift and try our own best actions" with unsparing scrutiny. For "a self-searching Christian," as Leighton observes, "is made up of humility and meekness. He forgives himself little, and others much." His daily cry unto the Lord is to be cleansed even from his secret faults; "for who can understand his errors?"† His security depends upon the atonement provided for "the iniquity of his holy things."

And yet we must not so understand this warning, as to neglect that fraternal rebuke, which the law of God requires us to administer to an erring brother. For, as Augustine intimated, it is the wrong, proud, or bitter spirit, which is here denounced, not the act of love, which "at the right time and in the right temper" the cleansing of our own moral vision will enable and constrain us to perform.‡

This review of the requirements of a holy God, and of the leading characteristics of that righteousness, which His people are ever longing to possess, cannot fail to impress every awakened Christian with a deep

\* 1 Cor. xi. 31.

† Psalm xix. 12.

‡ Augustine instances transient anger, and inveterate hatred, as severally illustrating the mote and the beam in the parabolical language of the Lord. One implies an impaired vision; the other involves absolute blindness. Trench p. 304—306.



sense of his own manifold shortcomings, and of the impossibility of ever meriting any recompense by his own works, or of obtaining justification by his own obedience. It is this experience, which renders the Gospel doubly precious. A Saviour is at hand to renew our hearts, to purify our souls, and to clothe us in His own spotless righteousness. All who flee to Him for refuge shall find a hearty welcome. For "He is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believes." He was animated by a spirit of unwearied love, *perfect* even as His heavenly Father, and "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," as our Mediator and Representative. His work is finished; faith leans upon it, and imparts life and peace to the renewed soul; which having "received Christ Jesus," in all His offices and fulness, now "walks in Him," in the habitual pursuit of holy obedience. For the elect of God are "chosen unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit,"—even "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."\*

\* See 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Peter i. 2. The order here is important, and strikingly illustrates 1 John i. 7; which so clearly implies the imperfection and sin still inherent in the children of light, even when they walk in the light. See also Exod. xxviii. 38.

## CHAPTER V.

*On not setting All Truth indiscriminately before  
all men.*

OUR Lord proceeds; “*give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.*” (v. 6.)

Both *dogs*\* and *swine*† were unclean animals, the objects of general abhorrence and disgust amongst the Jews, so that they became familiar emblems of bitter contentious spirits, and of reckless sensualists; who might, perhaps, exhibit hopeful signs of repentance, but who after a while invariably revert to their former courses, whether of folly or of lust, because strangers to the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. Under such circumstances, they ordinarily show themselves more desperate railers at virtue, and scoffers at holiness, openly displaying their odious colours, and nailing them

\* Phil. iii. 2; Rev. xxii. 15; Prov. xxvi. 11.

† 2 Peter ii. 22.

to the mast, as if they were champions of some great cause, thus becoming more dangerous characters in every respect.

“The mysteries of the kingdom” are the holy things, precious as pearls, which the Father graciously reveals to babes, but which He altogether conceals from the wise and prudent,\* who rely upon their own wisdom and righteousness. Now, although it is the duty, and most delightful privilege, of Christians, who have “this treasure in earthen vessels,” that “the excellency of the power may (be manifested to) be of God, and not of themselves,”† to communicate the truth to others, “there is a time to keep silence,” and persons to whom it would be evil and unbecoming to speak of divine things.

The rule against censorious judgments is not opposed to the exercise of that necessary discrimination, which the Lord here enjoins in this respect. For the duty of forbearance and of love is not to be strained, or pressed so far, as to endanger ourselves, or to weary our spirits in useless efforts.

The inspired proverbs are very explicit on this point. “He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner lest he hate thee.” And, “speak not in the ears of a fool; for he

\* Matt. xi. 25; xiii. 11. Tertullian applied the words of Jesus to the impropriety of baptising all indiscriminately. De Bapt. c. 18.

† 2 Cor. iv. 7.

will despise the wisdom of thy words.”\* But such lessons are easily perverted.

A decided aristocratical feeling pervaded the literature and philosophy of the ancient world,† and not only led the refined Greeks to regard themselves as nationally so superior to other nations, as to be entitled to hold them in bondage,‡ but prompted the more intellectual of their number to look down with contempt even upon the less highly favoured of their own countrymen.§ This notion was too eagerly adopted by Christian teachers at an early period, under the paramount and mischievous influence of Platonism. The philosopher thought it difficult to attain to the knowledge of the Creator,|| and impossible to make Him generally known, and dangerous to explain a pure scheme of doctrine to an ignorant multitude.¶ “Beware,” a Platonist exclaimed, “beware lest these things be laid before uneducated persons. They will treat that with ridicule, which the noble-minded account admirable; and regard with delight.”\*\* The celebrated distinction between *esoteric*

\* Prov. ix. 7, 8; xxiii. 9.

† Bildungsaristokratismus. (Neander.) In the language of Friar Bacon, every writer of reputation agreed in despising the ignorance and folly of the masses.

‡ Euseb. Præp. Evang. l. 12, c. 37.

§ Illustrated by the familiar anecdote in the history of Phocion, and the celebrated line of Horace, “odi profanum vulgus et arceo.”

|| Tertull. Apol. c. 46.

¶ Euseb. Præp. Evang. l. 8, c. 8.

\*\* Ib. l. 12, c. 7. The Bishop quotes as parallel Matt. vii. 6, and 1 Cor. ii. 14.

and *exoteric* doctrines naturally arose from such views; all were not adapted for general use; deeper secrets could be entrusted to the initiated alone.\*

Philo describes lessons even of trivial importance as sacred mysteries, or divine orgies, which must not be communicated to the uninitiated; because the wise man has many secrets above the comprehension of the multitude, which he ought not to divulge, without first testing the capacity and character of his hearers, lest they should be the cause of death rather than of life to them.†

The Christian fathers, Origen, Eusebius and Theodoret, supposed, that only *a few* were capable of understanding the evidences of Christianity, receiving its higher mysteries, and giving a sufficient reason of their hope. The *rest* must acquiesce in an unexamined and untried faith, and simply receive what is set before them by their teachers on their authority; being regarded by them as patients in the hands of skilful physicians! Passages applicable to profane and carnal unbelievers were perversely applied to this case;‡ and the necessity of appeals to the senses, and therefore of fictitious miracles, and

\* See Wytttenbach on Plato Phædon § 6, (= § 16, p. 62.)

† Quæst. in Gen. l. 4, § 67; (non *omnem* veritatem convenit dicere apud *omnes*) fragm. p. 651; 658, 659; de Cherub. § 12—14; Quæst. in Gen. l. 4, § 35. See Leg. Alleg. l. 3, § 77. On this principle Chrysostom left 1 Cor. xv. 29, unexplained; because he was preaching in the presence of some unbaptised persons! Beausobre on Matt. vii. 6.

‡ Eusebius Præp. i. 1; 5; xii. 7, with Heinichen's notes.

"pious frauds,"\* seemed unquestionable, as admirable means of promoting that blind undiscerning credulity, which was considered the utmost attainable by them.

No reserve, however, can be sanctioned by an enlightened Christian in the announcement of that Gospel

\* These are decidedly of heathen origin. Æschylus, or some other poet, cited by Stobæus under his name, declared that "God does not disown righteous deceit." Plato observes that truth, however excellent, is not easily inculcated, and that consequently the magistrate should probably have frequent recourse to falsehood and deception for the good of *the people*, and especially of the young, that they may be induced to act aright from choice, rather than by compulsion. (De Rep. v. p. 459; de Leg. ii. 8.) In such cases the philosopher regarded expediency alone as the test of right and wrong. Maximus of Tyre, a heathen philosopher of the second century, unhesitatingly asserts that "there is nothing excellent in speaking the truth, unless it be for the benefit of learners. The physician deceives his patient; the general his army; the pilot his crew; and no wrong is done. Falsehood may thus prove beneficial, and truth injurious." (Diss. 19, § 3. Compare Xenophon Mem. iv. 2, 17). But Philo carries out this principle to its fullest extent, and repeatedly enforces it. (Neander Gesch. T. i. p. 99, cites de Cherub. § 5; and Quod Deus Immut. § 14. See also Quod Det. Pot. Insid. § 7; de Migr. Abr. § 38; Quæst. in Gen. l. 4, § 2; and cf. de Somn. i. 40). He calls the injunction to speak truth at all times the dogma of an ignorant, unphilosophical mind; (Q. in Gen. l. 4, § 69), and deliberately vindicates the deceit practised by Jacob, as alike harmless and noble, or as skilful management suitable for the emergency. He even says, with a degree of subtilty supposed to be characteristic of the Jesuits, "the human mind assumes various phases according to circumstances, so that when Jacob said, I am Esau, it was *not false*, because his mind moved at the time in or towards the form characteristic of Esau!" (Ib. § 204—208). If we shudder at such wretched sophistry, let us carefully guard against "the first deviation from truth; for we know not where it will end." Perhaps like the trickling mountain stream it will rapidly swell into a

of the grace of God, which the church is required to proclaim to "every creature under heaven." Conviction is not the work of human reason, but of the Spirit of God; it is a privilege more frequently vouchsafed to

mighty flood, which will devastate the pastures of the flock, and sweep every landmark before it, in its turbid and tumultuous course.

We have still to trace this in the history of the Church. In vain had Julius Africanus, an old man, when Origen (born A.D. 186) was in his prime, indignantly protested against a foolish attempt to explain an apparent discrepancy in the Gospels on the Platonic principle. "May the day never come, when such reasoning shall prevail in the Church, and falsehood be supposed to contribute to the glory of Christ!" (Neander Gesch. T. i. p. 1224, note). Eusebius, however, the celebrated friend of Constantine, refers to Plato with approbation on this, as well as on many other points, to show the coincidence between his opinions and the oracles of God! (Præp. Evang. l. 12, c. 31, &c. He died A.D. 340). Cassian, a disciple of Chrysostom, openly asserts that falsehood is sometimes lawful. (Cave Hist. Lit. p. 264). It was a received maxim of the Syrian school in that generation, that "the end justifies the means." (Neander Gesch. T. ii. p. 457; 934). It had even become a common practice to intermingle truth and falsehood, in order to deceive the enemies of the faith, or to promote the welfare of mankind. Jerome, the learned monk of Bethlehem, the diligent translator of the Scriptures, the uncompromising assailant of every supposed heresy, not only justified the practice of his day, (A.D. 329—420), but even attributed similar management to the apostles themselves! (*falsitatem dispensativam*: see Gilly's *Vigilantius*, p. 265—270). It was said, for example, that Peter's dissimulation, and Paul's remonstrance against it at Antioch, were previously *arranged* by the parties for the fuller conviction of the Judaizers, and that consequently there was no real contest between them! Chrysostom elaborately maintains this in a sophistical homily on Gal. ii. 11. (Op. T. v. p. 800, &c.)

Theodoret, a man of eminence in the next generation, urged a friend to commit what he called a petty sin, or to subscribe articles of faith opposed to his conscientious opinion, in order to preserve others from

the poor and ignorant than to the wise and intellectual in this world. It is another thing to continue speaking, when men contradict and blaspheme, and openly despise the truth. There are even cases, when the persecuted

great transgression, as a work of manifest charity. Happily in that case his counsel was rejected. The venerable bishop preferred to be ejected from his see amidst the tears of an affectionate congregation: (Neander l.c.) But almost every page of ecclesiastical history is profaned, and its annals rendered uncertain by the prevalence of similar legalised deceit, and the circulation of artful legends. Coleridge justly observes that to the doctrine in question, and the practices derived from it, we must chiefly attribute the utter corruption of Christianity itself for so many ages. "By a system of accommodating truth to falsehood, the pastors of the church gradually changed the life and the light of the Gospel into the very superstitions, which they were commissioned to disperse," and "at this very hour Europe groans and bleeds in consequence."

We have dwelt so long upon this point, because it so painfully illustrates and explains the real nature and operations of matured Tractarianism, which is altogether a gross and palpable instance of studied fraud.

The apostle, however, pronounces just condemnation upon those, who "do evil that good may come;" (Rom. iii. 8, above page 157,) but if deceit and fraud be evil in themselves, and "no lie is of the truth," (1 John ii. 21,) this testimony proves that *they* can never be justified by the result, or by the motive of deceivers. Pascal says with energy, "whoever has recourse to a lie, serves the devil." Such a course is evidently irreconcilable with that freedom from guile, which marks every true Israelite. (John i. 47; Psalm xxxii. 2. Cf. 1 Peter ii. 1.) We need scarcely add that the words of St. Paul, "nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile," (2 Cor. xii. 16,) must either be read interrogatively, or ironically, as the course of his argument incontrovertibly proves.

But the doctrine of Plato is too acceptable to the corrupt minds of men, not to find practical advocates in every age. It places a powerful



ministers of Emmanuel must follow the solemn injunctions of their Master; and like Paul and Barnabas, when driven out of Antioch, shake off the very dust of their feet against scoffers, crying, "your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean."\* The office of

weapon in the hands of the rich and noble, enabling them to establish a moral and spiritual despotism over the minds of the poor and ignorant. If they can but once persuade themselves, that their motives are pure, and their object righteous, there will be no limit to their deceptions. Charles the First was no doubt under the influence of such a principle. Unhappy Bacon was a master in the art. He even asserts that "it is improper to call all untruths generally, and without exception unlawful," and appeals to Scripture, in refutation of the Puritans, to justify this position. (Works vol. ii. p. 503.) The world cannot condemn him; for it still sanctions its white lies, its equivocations, and its political subterfuges; but in the name of the apostles we denounce them all, as contrary to their solemn teaching.

It is obvious, indeed, that where deceit is sanctioned and employed, the falsehood must be skilfully disguised. Art is thus called into play, and the ingenuity of the human mind is engaged in the contrivance of such plausible figments, as will most readily accomplish the object in view. But a habit of lying is thus formed, and mars the whole character. The deceiver is deceived himself; he begins to believe his own lie, and is caught in his own snare, according to the retributive laws of the human mind, or of divine Providence; and the accumulating evil plunges all things in confusion. Hence that strange combination of fraud and self-delusion, (*fingunt pariter creduntque*) or of hypocrisy and fanaticism, which sometimes occasions a sharp and doubtful controversy as to the real character of individuals, who have sunk into "a middle state between illusion and voluntary fraud." The predominance of the one or of the other simply depends upon the point from which they set out.

\* See Mark vi. 11; Luke ix. 4, 5; Acts xiii. 45, 46; 50, 51; xviii. 6.

the ministry has then been sufficiently discharged; it would be alike evil and absurd to continue it under such circumstances.

The Lord Himself seems to have adopted His later method of teaching, in consequence of the insensibility and stubbornness of a deluded people, who hardened their hearts against His loving invitations;\* and hence His various parables of spiritual truth, which He subsequently explained to His disciples in private, veiled the holy mysteries of the kingdom from the profane, and concealed "the words of eternal life," the pearls of heaven, from those who would otherwise have trodden them under foot, and with aggravated fury have torn the Prophet in pieces before the time.†

There is "an imprudent zeal, and sometimes a mixture of an irreverent commonness," often manifested "in speaking of holy things indifferently in all companies," which Leighton considered scarcely suitable to the rule before us, as calculated to expose truth to the derision of the profane. It cannot serve any good purpose to force religious topics on the notice of those who openly avow their dislike to them; but yet another Scripture requires us to "be instant in season, and out of season," so that "the spirit of a sound mind," cherished by prayerful communion with a gracious Father, will best regulate the conversation of Christians according

\* Matt. xiii. 10—15.

† Like the wild boar out of the forest. Psalm lxxx. 13. (Trench.)

to circumstances, and practically indicate the limits, within which each divine precept must be restrained.

We ought not hastily to class any individual with the desperate characters here indicated. But there can be no question as to the impropriety of publishing the diaries of deceased Christians, and thus laying bare all the mysteries of a "life hid in Christ" to the scoffs and jests of a scornful and unbelieving world. Niebuhr well said, even of ordinary men, "there are garments of the soul which you should no more strip off than those of the body; and biography which veils nothing is neither right nor wholesome." A morbid sensibility may be aggravated by such records; and the dicta of uninspired men may be substituted for the noble testimonies of God, or assumed to be authoritative expositions of their lessons; but the Bible reader needs them not, and the irreligious may be confirmed by them in their enmity to the Gospel.

Generally, indeed, the importance of "rightly dividing the word of truth"\* cannot be estimated too highly. It has been well said, that the teacher must consider the capacity of his hearers, as one who pours water into a jar with a narrow mouth; not seeking self-display, but adapting himself to each,†—that he may be enabled to give him "his portion of meat in due season." The Lord only gradually unfolded the truth to His immediate

\* 2 Tim. ii. 15.

† Philo Quæst. in Gen. l. 4, § 104; Quod Deus Immut. § 42.

disciples, as "they were able to bear it;"\* for what is most nourishing and comforting to one may be poison to another; and the strong meat, or solid food, which experienced Christians receive with equal profit and delight, would be worse than useless to others. The apostle Paul had only fed the Corinthians with milk; and he declares that they were still unable to bear, or to digest anything more solid.† It is, indeed, deeply instructive to observe how admirably all his various epistles are adapted to the peculiar circumstances of those to whom he addressed himself.‡ It is not, therefore, the skilful division and sub-division of the subject of our discourses, which is the true object of ministerial labour: but the earnest and accurate application of that subject in its various particulars to various stages of Christian experience, or to various classes of ordinary hearers.

\* Mark iv. 33; John xvi. 12; 25.

† 1 Cor. iii. 2. Cf. Heb. v. 11—14.

‡ Observe especially the kindred epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. The Holy Spirit so often mentioned in the first scarcely appears in the second. The one body needed to be stirred up by the recollection of their exalted privileges to a consistent and spiritual life; the other required to be more firmly established in a correct view of the personal dignity and all-sufficiency of Christ.

## CHAPTER VI.

*The privilege of importunate and constant Prayer.*

WHETHER we regard the moral characteristics of the people of God, or the persecutions to which they are exposed, or their exalted position and consequent responsibility, as the salt of the earth and the light of the world, or the extent of that righteousness, which (as such) they are required to exhibit, that they may glorify their Heavenly Father, or the duty of simple affiance in divine Providence under all circumstances, we shall be ready to exclaim with the apostle, "who is sufficient for these things?"\* It is not in us to attain to such perfection. All the energies of new creatures will fail, unless daily upheld by the outstretched arm of Jehovah, directed by His Spirit, and crowned by His continual blessing.

"A throne of grace" is, therefore, again set before us, that we may approach it with confidence, and thus

\* 2 Cor. ii. 16. The Latin Homilist supposes the words of the Lord to have reference to the difficulty of compliance with the foregoing precepts. Op. Chrysost. T. vii. p. 835.

“obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.”\* In the former part of the discourse, the obligation and religious duty were explained and enforced; we are here led to consider the exalted privilege and comfort of prayer.

*“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

*“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?” (v. 7—11.)*

How refreshing are these words of gracious promise, unlimited as the love and power of Him that spake. He is gratified by our petitions, and waits to answer them, as “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.”

A sense of poverty and misery constrains every awakened sinner to pray,† to ask for mercy, to seek relief, and to knock with the gathering importunity of vehement desire, as it were, at the gates of heaven itself, for admission into its courts. But, in his ignorance and confusion, he is soon discouraged; and therefore

\* Heb. iv. 16.

† Acts ix. 11.

promises, like those before us, are accumulated in the Scriptures for his support. “*Whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”\* Rutherford quaintly says, “the seeker and the sigher is at last a singer and enjoyer; nay, I have seen a dumb man get alms from Christ.” One grand source of our hesitation is an ignorant misapprehension of the divine character. We are too apt to look upon God, from the far country into which we have wandered, as an austere or harsh Being, and therefore to regard His service as irksome, His will as unreasonable, or impracticable, and His dispensations as unkind; and under these false impressions to flee further and further from His presence, or even in our hearts to banish Him from His own world, and then to esteem it more lovely, more beautiful, and more marvellous. It is the gracious design of the Gospel to undeceive us, and clearly to reveal Him, whom we have hitherto ignorantly worshipped, or thus more ignorantly and blindly neglected. Christ came to make known the will of His Heavenly Father, and to declare His boundless compassion. His invitations are full and free. As the antetype of the serpent of brass, “the just God and a Saviour,” He exhorts “all the ends of the earth to look unto Him and be saved.”† He has “taken away the sin of the world.” The church of sinners, already rescued, in the actual enjoyment of redemption,

\* Rom. x. 13; Acts ii. 21, from Joel ii. 32.

† Isaiah xlv. 21, 22.

and in particular the ministry of reconciliation, entrusted to such unclean lips as ours, are established on the Rock of ages, as perpetual memorials of divine mercy and forbearance, and as unequivocal witnesses of that wondrous grace, which has drawn them with the gentle violence of loving constraint, out of their natural darkness and misery, into the fulness of "His marvellous light," even the light of love; that none who seek the Lord may ever despair.

The Son of man wears no terrors upon His brow; He is "meek and lowly in heart;" He *wept over* Jerusalem in its impenitence; He prayed for His murderers in the very height of the paroxysms of their fury. The sinful woman, who washed His feet with her tears, boldly trusted in His love, and was not disappointed; a dying robber, who a little while before concurred in the scoffs of His enemies, turned to Him in the calm composure of strong faith, and was borne by Him into Paradise, as the first fruits of His agony and death. "He will not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax:"\* gentle alike to friends and foes. Why, then, should the humble suppliant hesitate for a moment? We need no intercessor. Even Chrysostom observes, that the woman of Canaan prevailed more when she pleaded for herself, than when others interceded for her, without hesitation ascribing her acceptance to her importunity.† Let us, then, continue

\* Matt. xii. 20.

† T. v. p. 394, 395.



in prayer, "pouring out our hearts"\* before the Lord, in humble confession of our vileness; for "He giveth liberally to all men, and upbraideth not."† It is His own word,—“ask and ye shall receive.”

But it is of the Father that Christ now speaks, as unto the pardoned children of God; for all the grace, which we have seen in the Son, is but an image of His; for they are One. He causeth the sun to shine, and the rain to descend, upon the evil and unthankful; He feeds the ravens; He clothes the rapidly fading grass with beauty; as it were prodigal of His love, because *that* is the essence of His character.

The parables of the hesitating friend, unseasonably aroused at midnight, and of the unjust judge, recorded by St. Luke, yet more strikingly assure us of His graciousness, and of His marvellous condescension to our weakness. The first of these follows a repetition of the Lord's prayer, and precedes an exhortation parallel to the present. The door may be *shut*; it shall be opened to His children, even although this may apparently be attended with much inconvenience.‡ But the other parable is yet more impressive. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint;" not simply, because a *friend* might thus be induced to deny himself, and to take trouble on our account, but because even an unrighteous judge, "who neither feared God, nor re-

\* Psalm lxii. 8. Philo says that the eternal fountains of grace are open to all supplicants seeking excellence or virtue. De Carit. § 4.

† James i. 5.

‡ Luke xi. 5—8.

garded man," has been persuaded by a poor helpless widow to avenge her, and to undertake her cause, "lest by her continual coming she should weary him."\* How opposed this case designedly is to the circumstances of the church, in every respect but that of existing trouble and distress. For we apply neither to a hesitating Friend, nor to a wicked Judge, but to a Righteous King, and to a merciful Father; and we come to Him, not as unknown and unheeded, but as His own elect, whom He loves, and tenderly regards with unalterable favor, under "the shadow" and direction of an Advocate, who ever pleads our cause, even when we ourselves are silent and slothful, and of One, moreover, who can never be rejected. How, then, can it be possible for Him to reject our suit, when we present it to Him with that unwearied earnestness, in which He specially delights? He may (seem to) bear long with us; but He will (surely hear, and) avenge us speedily.

Who, indeed, can fail to appreciate the tender compassion and love, implied by the endearing name of Father? Evil as the very kindest and holiest of us are, we all know how to give good things to our children; and, unless brutalised beyond the ordinary level of a fallen nature, we cannot bear to mock, or even to disappoint them; and He is altogether good. Can He fall short of our ordinary standard? Impossible. The father of the prodigal "ran to meet him," when

\* Luke xviii. 1—8.

yet "a great way off." *He* "*still* lives," unchanged and unchangeable, "very compassionate and very full of mercy,"\* the inexhaustible fountain of consolations. Are we not living witnesses of this truth? Why, then, should we now doubt, or distrust Him and His good Providence? Have not we also been "really confirmed in many particulars," by our past experience, "that God heareth prayers?" Ought we not to pray with confidence "for anything of how little importance soever,"† seeing He delighteth to answer and to bless us? He has commanded us to "call upon Him in the time of trouble," with a promise to deliver us,‡ whatever may be the emergency, or the danger which threatens us, or the situation which harrasses us. It is true, that we may mistake the nature of things, as our own children often do; and in consequence of this call good evil, and therefore deprecate it, or evil good, and therefore very anxiously desire it. But our Heavenly Father will not permit us to destroy, or even to injure ourselves, so that if a trial be necessary to secure to us some permanent and superior good, "the thorn in the flesh" will not be removed at our request; but we shall receive strength to bear it; or, perhaps, even to rejoice in it.§ Meanwhile "we must not take delay for a

\* πολυεύπλαγχτος καὶ πολυέλεος. Clemens A. De Div. Serv. § 39.

† With Rutherford.

‡ Psalm l. 15.

§ 2 Cor. xii. 7—10; Psalm cxxxviii. 3.

denial;" for whatever good thing, either in providence or grace, is not inconsistent with His gracious purpose to bring us to His glory, shall sooner or later be freely bestowed upon all "who walk uprightly."\* Or how can He, "who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,"† withhold from the objects of His eternal love anything really conducive to their happiness or security? We are not straitened in God. If "we have not," it is "because we ask not," or because "we ask amiss,"‡ without faith or spiritual desire, or because He defers the gift to try our faith, and to stimulate us to more earnest and importunate prayer.§ Nay, such is His marvellous lovingkindness, that, when at times we are gazing with trembling and distress upon the dense threatening clouds before us, giving way to an evil heart of unbelief, and "so troubled that we cannot speak," a rainbow suddenly appears to span the mass, or a manifest token of covenant love is forced upon our attention, by some alleviating circumstance of the trial itself, unexpectedly revealing His Presence. It is the Sun of Righteousness *behind* us, whom we had almost forgotten, or whose favor we had doubted, or whose throne of grace we had hesitated or feared to approach, who shines forth and irradiates the gloomy scene with sudden beauty, and thus invites us to return, and once

\* Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

† Rom. viii. 32.

‡ James iv. 2, 3.

§ See Matt. xv. 22—28; and Gen. xxxii. 24—29.

more gaze upon the light of His countenance, and hold refreshing communion with Him, in childlike confidence and thankful supplications.\*

In the parallel passage in St. Luke, the promise is not of "good things" generally as here, but of the Holy Spirit in particular, thus raising our minds to something more elevated than the present context. For *this* seems more especially to intimate the folly and guilt of needless anxiety about temporal things, or the certainty of obtaining a sufficient supply of every real necessary of life;† whereas *that* more fully reveals the grand object of Christ's heavenly mission, and the gift of the Comforter,‡ as an indwelling Spirit of adoption, and of supplication and of grace. It is He, who "maketh intercession" in the hearts of His people, when "they know not what to pray for as they ought, according to

\* Chrysostom calls prayer, when it proceeds from a sober, vigilant soul, a fire, T. v. p. 370, or a mighty weapon, a heavenly panoply, an unfailing treasure, a calm haven, a root, fountain or parent of innumerable blessings, adorning the soul more than a royal diadem of purple the body. T. v. p. 176; 749; 757; T. i. p. 844; 388; 418; T. iii. p. 832, &c. Nothing is really comparable. It renders what is difficult easy; what is crooked straight; what seems impracticable possible. T. ii. p. 994. The plant could sooner flourish without water, or the body without light, than the soul without prayer. This at once enlightens it as the sun, (T. i. p. 840,) and nourishes it as the refreshing shower. It must be remembered, however, that this is the language of a Rhetorician, ever studious of effect, and prone to exaggeration.

† Above chap. vi. 8; 32.

‡ See John vii. 37—39; iv. 10; 14; xiv. 15—17, &c.

the will of God,"\* or when their minds are agitated and distracted; and thus most effectually consoles them, and enables them to overcome in every conflict.

Observe, however, that, in both passages, the promise is made to those who are called "evil." Sad humiliating truth. Even sceptics have been forced to confess, that the philosopher lives ill in despite of all his maxims,† and that, if the world could trace all the motives, which prompted our best actions, we should be ashamed of them.‡ The first temptation usually proves fatal. Either "profit persuades, or pleasures entice us," or custom and example draw us aside to some odious course; or a hasty and impatient temper chafes us, or our passions burst out in uncontrollable fury. And when born again, the children of God are deeply conscious of their own proneness to fall, and of the evil that still mingles with their good. They have earthly members to mortify, weights and easily besetting sins, sorely impeding their progress heavenwards, to renounce, and indwelling sin and its frequent out-breaks continually to confess, that they may experience afresh the cleansing efficacy of a Saviour's blood; and on this account, they groan, being sorely burdened.§ It is true, indeed, that some regard all this as now obsolete

\* Rom. viii. 26, 27.

† La Bruyere. Cf. Lactantius Inst. iii. 15, 26, of the ancients. "Ipsi et cedunt vitiis, et fatentur plus valere naturam."

‡ Rochefoucauld. Later writers speak more proudly, from their closets, in profound self-ignorance.

§ "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24. See 2 Cor. v. 4.

cant; and one has said, "if a man thinks himself a miserable offender, let him away with the offence, and be done with the complaint once and for ever;" but this is only a revival of that old Pharisaical spirit, which is so natural to proud benighted man, against which the inspired volume may be justly esteemed a perpetual protest, and the experience of every enlightened, conscientious man bears constant testimony.\* But, to the Christian, the painful fact affords another ground of earnest and most importunate prayer; whilst it becomes an additional source of comfort to him, in all his conflicts and troubles, to find divine promises so inseparably connected with the declaration of his inherent sinfulness!

Peter was naturally bold and ardent; and yet he failed in that very particular, in which his failure, humanly speaking, was most unlikely to occur, even from fear of his fellows: for nature is really no substitute for grace; and he had restrained prayer. Paul, on the other hand, though no less intrepid by nature and by habit, not only himself prayed most fervently, but requested the prayers of his brethren, that he might continue to speak with suitable boldness;† and grace invariably upheld him.

Then let us pray continually,‡ in faith and love; for, "feathered with such wings, prayer flies straight

\* Even Philo bids us condemn ourselves. Fragm. p. 658.

† Eph. vi. 19, 20. Cf. Acts iv. 29—31.

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 8; 1 Thess. v. 17; Phil. iv. 6; Psalm cxli. 2, &c. Daniel vi. 10, with Psalm lv. 17.

to heaven, a sacrifice to God, a scourge to Satan and a succour to ourselves ;”\* hallowing every occurrence of life, and every feeling of our hearts ; since the Lord is never weary of our cries, and we are always dependent upon His aid.

Chrysostom refers to the customary mode of building in his day to illustrate and enforce this precept. To secure walls built of weak and ineligible materials, such as small stones, or sun-dried bricks, these were bound together by strong tie-beams of wood.† He desired that the frequency of our supplications should similarly interlace all our worldly business, and thus give strength and coherence to works and efforts, which would otherwise fail as weak and worthless. For “as worldly cares and desires often intrude and creep into our devotions, distracting and defiling them,” spiritual thoughts and holy affections should “insinuate themselves into, and hallow our secular transactions.” Employments, not thus seasoned, “can have no true life or savour in them,” but will become “foul and noisome, or at least flat and insipid‡ unto us.”

No wise man ever despises trifles, either in religion or in ordinary matters. The Lord assures us that “he who is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also

\* Archbishop Sandys.

† T. ii. p. 995. *ἡμῶν τῶν τοιῶν*. See the note on Habakkuk ii. 11. in the Pictorial Bible.

‡ Barrow. Works V. i. p. 154.



in much.”\* It is, therefore, necessary to maintain a watchful frame, and a prayerful† habit at all times, and to carry every thing to the Lord, that no trifling annoyance may fret our spirits, and that no sin may establish itself in our hearts, and be excused as insignificant.

\* Luke xvi. 10.

† Tertullian says, Christians pray with outstretched hands, because they are without guile; with heads uncovered, because they are without shame; and without a prompter, because they speak from the heart. Apol. § 30. Wherever thou art, thou canst erect thine altar, if thou hast a watchful or sober mind. Chrysost. T. ii. p. 996. Neither place nor time can present any impediments to thy will. T. vi. p. 689.

---

## CHAPTER VII.

*The Golden Rule.*

HAVING thus in a sort of corollary to the Lord's prayer encouraged His disciples to approach a Heavenly Father, without doubt or hesitation, in every time of need, Jesus resumes His moral teaching, and summarily expresses that rule of righteousness, or of love to our fellows, which is the surest test of internal holiness, or of the prevalence of justifying faith in the hearts of the children of God.

*"Therefore\* all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ; for this is the law and the prophets." (v. 12.)*

In other words, "be ye perfect," and therefore kind and "merciful" to all, "even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," or good to all His creatures, and act towards others, whether friends or enemies, as you would that they should act towards you, and thus

\* Campbell omits this, as the Greek particle is often a mere expletive.

manifest the depth and sincerity of your love.\* Or, as you desire others to judge you, and measure to you again, even so deal with them in every particular; for whatever may be your wishes and expectations, this, as I have already declared to you,† must be the result. Moreover, God acts towards you on the principle of love, on which parents treat their children,‡ and if you act towards each other in the same manner, you will at once enjoy more perfect conformity to Him, and a more comforting sense of His nearness to you in prayer. For those ever appeal to a throne of grace with the greatest confidence, who exhibit the most sincere benevolence to their fellows. Therefore, “my little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth,” that hereby we may “assure our hearts before Him,” and receive “whatsoever we ask of Him.”§

The happy results of a sincere and rational compliance with the neglected requirements of the present comprehensive rule,|| with the limitation obviously implied, can scarcely be exaggerated. For it is not,

\* In St. Luke vi. 30, 31, the rule follows the injunction to give to those that ask, and to abstain from reclaiming what has been taken from us.

† Above chap. vii. 2.

‡ See Psalm ciii. 13; Mal. iii. 17.

§ See 1 John iii. 18—22. Cf. Psalm xxvi. 6.

|| Chrysostom contrasts its simplicity and plainness with the obscure and elaborate discussions of Plato on the nature of righteousness. T. vii. p. 7; 239. Let, he says, thy will be thy law. Dost thou desire to receive benefits? Benefit others, &c. T. i. p. 171.

of course, whatever a fool or a madman might desire or anticipate, nor yet whatever inordinate self-love\* might eagerly claim, but whatever is just and reasonable, or consistent with the divine will, and with the general welfare of society, which we are required to fulfil. Were this actually done, it is obvious that cheating and dishonesty, slander and censorious judgments, anger, malice and evil speaking would at once cease. The person, the honour, the family and the property of each person would be guaranteed by the self-love and the self-interest of the whole community. The husband and wife, the master and servant, the rich and poor, the employer and employed, would live in perfect harmony and love, habitually studying their mutual interests, wishes and convenience, and therefore sedulously avoiding the most distant approach to unkind or irritating language.† How the days of heaven would in this way be witnessed on that earth, which now groans under the tyranny of selfishness, and of cold indifference to avoidable evil. Or how could the false, pretentious righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees have been more effectually condemned and exposed than by the

\* *φιλαυτία* signifies excessive self-love. See Aristotle Polit. ii. 5. This is denounced by Philo as the greatest of all evils; de Cong. Erud. Grat. § 2; and represented by Clement as the invariable cause of all sins. Strom. vi. 7, 56.

† Contrast Eccles. vii. 21, 22. Pascal says, "if men knew exactly what they say of each other, there would not be four friends in the world."

exhibition of such conduct on the part of the disciples of Jesus?

And yet this admirable rule, so conducive to the welfare of society, and so signally illustrating the excellence of religion, is not here laid down as anything *new*, but expressly grounded on the authority of the law and of the prophets.\* It had been partially anticipated by heathen philosophers. Thales, for instance, declared that a truly just and good man would never do anything, which would provoke his reproof, or excite his indignation, if done by others.† Isocrates not only requires men, in the name of Nicocles, to abstain from doing what would irritate them, if they experienced it, but generally enjoins them to behave towards others, as they desired him to act towards them.‡ Tobit merely expresses the negative rule; “do not to another what thou hatest,”§ and this was the maxim adopted by the Emperor Alexander Severus, and not only engraven upon his palace and other public buildings, but proclaimed by the crier, whenever any criminal was punished.||

\* This is omitted by St. Luke, and no doubt was forgotten by Gibbon. Tertullian indirectly shows its truth, adv. Marc. iv. 16, but does not allude to this clause.

† Diog. Laert. i. 36.

‡ Nicocl. p. 39; and p. 37. The latter passage is overlooked by Trench p. 316.

§ Chap. iv. Quoted as Scripture by Chrysost. T. iii. p. 42, &c. A similar saying occurs in Philo fragm. p. 630.

|| Lampridius, cited Enc. Metr. Div. Hist. V. iii. p. 101. (Do not to another, what thou wouldest not that another should do unto thee.)

The evangelical statement is more bold and positive, as a law of active benevolence, since this was designed to become the prominent characteristic of that church, which, under the constraining influence of the Spirit, humbly follows its glorious Head, ever "going about doing good."

A fragment has been cited from Philo, in which he exhorts men to act by their servants, as they would that God should act by them, that they may receive like for like; so that he seems to have correctly apprehended the grand principle, distinctly embodied, but not in the first instance positively expressed, in the Old Testament. For as it would be evidently unreasonable, or necessarily futile, to attempt to teach children by mere abstract reasoning, or by the simple assertion of broad principles, instead of leading them upwards from particulars, and teaching them by details, so uneducated adults are proverbially unable to grasp the very theories which they may be practically working out, and must therefore be instructed in the same manner. Hence it is that the careless reader constantly overlooks the admirable law, distinctly enunciated by Moses, in the Levitical precept so often quoted,\* as the rule of that perfection to which the Israel of God were to be raised, in conformity to the divine exemplar; but to which a barbarous people, such as the Jews then seem to have become, through the degrading effects of long and bitter

\* Levit. xix. 18.

servitude, and of the prevalent manners of the age, could scarcely aspire. It was, doubtless, on this account, that so much of the Mosaic legislation was of a restraining or mitigating character, adapted to the existing state of the nation,\* as a civil and political system, and therefore in some degree bending to "the hardness of their hearts." But even these temporary details and permissive enactments, on which attention is unduly fixed, are really grounded upon the sublime principle of equal love, which pervades the law and the prophets,† and which is therefore here presented to our notice with confirmatory authority by the Lord Himself. For the faith and practice of Job were alike evangelical; and the prophets Micah and Hosea enforced "the weightier matters of *the law*, judgment, mercy and faith," or "the love of God," so shamefully neglected by the hypocritical Pharisees, with peculiar urgency.‡

\* See note page 166.

† Matt. xxii. 35—40.

‡ Job. xxix.; xxxi.; Hosea xii. 6; x. 12; Micah vi. 8; Matt. xxiii. 23; Luke xi. 42. See also Isaiah lviii.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*Practical Applications.*

THE obvious difficulty of observing the rule last announced, or even generally of attaining to the righteousness previously unfolded, and the rare occasions in which men have laboured with a single eye in the service of the Lord, to the exclusion of all idols, naturally suggested the solemn practical appeals, with which the Lord concludes His discourse.

I. "*Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because\* strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it.*" (v. 13, 14.)

The question was subsequently put to the Lord, but probably in a careless spirit, "are there few that be saved?" He then replied with yet greater solemnity, "*strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*"†

\* Rather, according to a better text, "but how." Campbell.

† Luke xiii. 23, 24.



We have already seen the necessity of decision, and the impossibility of making any compromise between two contradictory systems. "Life and death" have thus again been set before us; and we are exhorted firmly and deliberately *to choose* the first. There must be exertion and conflict, before it can be attained. Indolent wishes, passing desires, feeble resolutions avail nothing: "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force;" but "the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." Procrastination destroys many; they are always waiting for a more "convenient season" which never arrives. Ignorance of their danger, or of the obstacles to be surmounted, deceives many more; for the portal through which we must pass is strait and low, or narrow and confined; and the way into which it introduces us is of a similar character, fenced in on every side, like the path of the vineyards, along which Balaam rode on his journey to the king of Moab, where there was no room to turn either to the right hand or to the left;\* and there are few that find this.† On the contrary, the gate is wide, and the way spacious, that leads to destruction; and it is thronged by a multitude, whose example and consent must naturally attract our notice, and may draw us on after them without inquiry,

\* Num. xxii. 24; 26.

† "Let us follow whithersoever Christ may summon us, and not scruple whatever may be the character of the course. He stretches out His hand to uphold us, and will never suffer us to fall." See Luke xxii. 31, 32, &c. Chrysost. T. v. p. 924, 925.

or so much, perhaps, as a suspicion of the ruin which impends.

The general object of the parable is thus obvious. Even heathens taught in similar allegories the various characteristics of vice and virtue, and the difficulty of attaining to the glorious elevation of the one, and the facility with which the other allures and enchains her countless votaries.\* Pythagoras warned his disciples, with this view, not to travel along the highway. The mystery is great; but every thoughtful inquirer has acknowledged with awe, that the noblest in every kind is the rarest.† Niebuhr once exclaimed with affecting earnestness, "the noble path of life is terribly narrow!" Others, however, now look around them with a sardonic grin for a hero of ancient stature, an idol whom they may worship, a demigod who can effect the changes, which, in the midst of abounding evil of every kind, under the tyranny of common places, the gross incompetence of ordinary statesmen, and the general dearth of moral greatness, they believe to be essential to the happiness of mankind. But what will be the probable result of this growing feeling? Is it not the preparatory spirit, which will eventually lead such men to acknow-

\* Hesiod in a celebrated passage, *Op.* v. 287, &c., cited by Xenophon *Mem.* ii. 1, 20; Prodicus, *id.* § 21—34, &c.

† Good is rare; evil manifold and most fruitful. Philo de Ebriet. § 7; *Leg. Alleg.* i. 32; *Quod Omn. Prob. Lib.* § 10. Few seek excellence in the ways of prudence and temperance. *De Agric.* § 23. Cf. *Leg. Alleg.* l. 2, § 24.

ledge the claims of Antichrist,\* when he comes in his own name, and to devote themselves to his service? It must be tremblingly remembered, that those will be given over to strong delusions, even to believe a lie, who receive not the love of the truth, that they may be saved.†

*The few* have received this; and therefore, though they also mourn and are troubled, on account of the painful scenes around them, they patiently wait for the true Deliverer.

These also were once wanderers in the broad road, each in his own peculiar track, according to the differences of temperament, or of taste, inherent or acquired, which distinguish one man from another; and upon this each one entered naturally, without an effort or a struggle. It is "the course of this world," the way of "the flesh;" but its end is death eternal. No smile from a heavenly Father, no grace from a compassionate Saviour, no consolation from a Holy Spirit can rest there; no ray of hope, no experience of peace, can alleviate its fatal termination. The wicked, "though hand join in hand," shall be "driven away in his wickedness," as chaff before the whirlwind.

Some, indeed, partially awakened to a sense of this danger, too readily acquiesce in a formal profession, in continued conformity to the standard of the multitude, or of their leaders, and whisper peace to themselves,

\* John v. 43.

† 2 Thess. ii. 7—12.

because they accomplish a certain routine of duties, or because they discover, as they suppose, a vast superiority in their own character. Others, again, more aroused by a sense of the holiness of Jehovah, and by the solemn nearness of eternal realities, have anxiously inquired "how can man be just before God?" and when they have felt the impossibility of framing any adequate reply to this question from the conclusions of unaided intellect, have been so encompassed with the terrors of the Lord, as with avenging flames of fire, that they have cried out with fear, in the deep agonies of their souls, for pardon and deliverance. And yet even such strong feelings have gradually subsided amidst the bustle or the pleasures of the world; so that these anxious ones have eventually stopped short of the strait gate. But *the few* have been wrought upon more deeply and effectually, either through the instrumentality of warnings, or exhortations, or promises; gently, as Lydia, or terribly, as the Jailor; or, perhaps, when full of fury and enmity against the truth, like Saul of Tarsus; or, it may be, when earnestly perusing the duly prized, but really unknown, testimonies of God, like the Ethiopian treasurer. All alike, however, when called by the voice of the good Shepherd Himself, according to His eternal purpose, by the power of His quickening Spirit, have believed in His love, and relied upon His finished work, and thus received Him into their hearts, in all the fulness of His grace.

Christ Himself said, "I am the door," and "I am

the way," and "I am the Life." None assuredly but those who come to Him, and walk abidingly in Him, can enjoy the blessings of His kingdom, or finally obtain everlasting life.\* But it seems to be more accordant with the general scope of the present Scripture to regard "the strait gate" as here significant of repentance, or of the new birth, and to connect "the narrow way" with "the highway of holiness," by which alone any man can enter into the kingdom of God.† It thus enforces the ordinary call of Jesus and of His disciples to repentance;‡ as that is expanded in the apostolic exhortations to the Corinthians to "be reconciled to God," and not to "receive His grace in vain," but to come out and separate themselves from the ungodly,§ carefully avoiding any contact with "the unclean thing,"|| that they might be graciously received and acknowledged by a loving Father.¶

No cherished sin, no proud, self-righteous feelings can possibly pass through this strait gate. All accepted travellers to Zion must "walk circumspectly," and labour to "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."\*\*\* It is not that of ourselves we can either repent or

\* John x. 7; xiv. 6.

† Isaiah xxxv. 8.

‡ Matt. iv. 17, &c.

§ Compare Psalm i.

|| Sin, or a spiritual idol. Cf. 1 John v. 21.

¶ 2 Cor. v. 20; vi. 1; 17, 18.

\*\*\* 2 Cor. vii. 1, too often disconnected from vi. 14—18; which is then perverted to show, that, in service and worship, fellowship is forbidden with unbelievers.

walk holily; but that "the precepts of the word are the usual instruments by which God works those things that He requires of us."\* Repentance must be preached in the Name of Christ alone.† It is a divine gift, but immediately resulting from a distinct vision of a crucified Redeemer, through His Spirit; and therefore its reality is ever attested by subsequent holiness of conduct.‡

The law is precise. "Ye shall observe to do as the Lord your God hath commanded you; ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left."§ The change to be realised is complete. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."||

Nor are the promises less distinct and explicit. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."¶

Observe, however, where the Lord lays the emphasis; it is upon *entering* in. There lies the difficulty. When

\* Bishop Reynolds.

† Luke xxiv. 47.

‡ Matt. iii. 8; Luke iii. 8; Acts xxvi. 18; 20.

§ Deut. v. 32; Prov. iv. 25, 27.

|| 2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 14, 15.

¶ Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27; Isaiah xxx. 21.

that is overcome, the sheep must be safely guided and kept by a faithful God, according to His covenant, through the intercession of His Son.\* This was not well understood by the ancient doctors of the church. "A thousand obstacles occur to our successful progress. Scarcely one here and there, perhaps not one, has reached the goal without a check or a fall. Many have run well for years, and then at last, in the very sunset of life, fallen into iniquity; nor have earnest penitents less repeatedly relapsed into their old ways." Such thoughts pressed gloomily on the mind of Philo,† and they are adopted by Chrysostom. "If few find the way, how much fewer reach the goal!"‡ With such a doctrine, peace must be impossible, or can only be maintained by dangerous self-confidence. But though Christians are only kept "through faith," in the way of obedience, watchfulness and prayer, it is the unequivocal promise of Jesus, that "His sheep shall never perish."§ Doubtless, therefore, as Hooker well observes, in promising to save them, "God promised also to preserve them in that without which there can be no salvation, as also from that whereby it is irrecoverably lost." It is "the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom."

\* 1 Peter i. 5; John xvii. 11, 12, 15, &c.; Heb. vii. 25.

† Quæst in Gen. i. 85; iv. 45; in Exod. i. 7, 11, 40; de Somn. ii. 20, 21; de Agric. § 28, 29, 40; de Leg. ii. 21; i. 28. Fragm. p. 648; 654. "This belies the proverb, the beginning is half of the whole: let us all walk humbly."

‡ Op. T. iv. p. 420. "Many fail at the very mouth of the haven."

§ John x. 27, 28.

Their "names are written in heaven." They are exhorted therefore not to fear, and even commanded to rejoice, as His own elect, the objects of His everlasting love.\*

It is true that those only who overcome all the manifold obstacles† to their triumph can enjoy the promises.‡ This is no time for ease and carnal indifference. The Christian must "watch unto prayer," and "keep under his body, and bring it into subjection,"§ and thus "fight the good fight of faith," patiently "enduring hardness," and still press forwards in his appointed course with unwearied energy, until the prize is actually won.|| But "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light;"¶ for they bear their object more steadily in view, and connect the end

\* Luke xii. 32; x. 20, &c. Note especially Mark xiii. 20; and John vi. 44, with Jerem. xxxi. 3.

† Eph. vi. 12; Luke viii. 14; 1 Tim. i. 19; iv. 1—3, &c.

‡ Rev. ii. 7; 11; 17; 26, &c.; James i. 12.

§ 1 Cor. ix. 27, with the admonitory types and histories of the following passage, x. 1—12. It is a wretched gloss to say that the question here is not of life or salvation, but of reward. See 2 Tim. ii. 5, with iv. 7, 8. The believer is conscious that all is of grace, and yet *acts* as if all depended upon himself. "Conditional propositions," as Bishop Reynolds well says, "do not imply that our performances work upon God to do what He had said; as if the performance of the duty was only ours, and then the performance of the promise alone His; but they intimate the order and connexion, which the Lord has set amongst His own gifts."

|| 1 Cor. xvi. 13; Phil. iii. 12—14; Eph. vi. 10—17; Heb. xii. 1, &c.

¶ Luke xvi. 8.



and the means more consistently together, ever watching for opportunities, eagerly apprehending them as they occur, and thus exerting themselves to the utmost to gain their end, whether stimulated by necessity, passion or desire. A monk, Pambos, when he visited Alexandria at the invitation of the celebrated Athanasius, is said to have burst into tears at the sight of a public performer, not only from horror, as he contemplated the misery that awaited her, the wages of her shame, but because he felt how much less earnest he was in seeking to please his God, than she was to gratify her wretched admirers. Let such considerations urge us to more holy self-suspicion, and more self-denying exertions to "make our calling and election sure;"\* not simply because "to our safety our own sedulity is required,"† as the means to an end,‡ but because sloth and lukewarmness at once dishonour our God, and bring leanness upon our own souls, or deprive us of all comforting assurances, unless we wilfully deceive ourselves. Grace alone can give us the victory, but that is never idle nor barren.§ True faith, its result, leans with confidence on an Almighty arm, and on a faithful Promiser,|| and is never dis-

\* 2 Peter i. 5—12.

† Hooker.

‡ Both ordained by the same wisdom, and secured by the same power. See the familiar illustration of this, drawn from Acts xxvii. 31, with 22; 25, by Dr. Chalmers and others.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 10.

|| 1 Cor. x. 13; Isaiah xlix. 15, 16; liv. 9, 10, 17; Heb. vi. 17, 18; Rom. viii. 1; 31, &c.

appointed. "For whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."\* They are "more than conquerors through Him that loved them."†

On this very account, however, it is the more necessary to look well to the first step. So many mistake or misrepresent the nature of true conversion, or the outward manifestations of the new birth, in order to explain the fall of supposed converts, that it is most essential for us to entertain correct views on this point, lest we should acquiesce in a superficial change. A man may go very far, and yet be found wanting at the last. The difference between the wise and foolish virgins was imperceptible to man, and only ascertained by the latter, when it was too late to supply the defect. We must look with greater satisfaction upon what is tremblingly proclaimed than upon an ostentatious profession, ardently assumed; but the question is not the manner, but the reality of the change. Whether "persuasion enter like a sunbeam," or be wrought amidst the gloom and darkness of the hurricane or earthquake, it must produce a burning, not a phosphorescent, light, and be witnessed by the abiding unction of the Holy Spirit. Then it knits the heart to Christ, as its "all in all;" it constrains the believer to hate, and to fight

\* Rom. viii. 30. Links in a golden chain, which Satan can never sever.

† Id. ver. 37.

against all sin; it clothes him with humility; it inspires him with an earnest desire for the salvation of others, with delight in the society of the godly, and with a spirit of prayer and thanksgiving.

Let none who are conscious of such an experience be discouraged, if others fall away and become reprobates, like Demas. "Will you judge of wheat by chaff, which the wind hath scattered from amongst it? Have the children no bread, because the dogs have not tasted of it? Are Christians deceived of that salvation which they look for, because they are denied the joys of the life to come, which were no Christians? Children abide in the house for ever; they are bondmen and bondwomen that are cast out.—Babes, then, be not deceived. His servants forsake not God. They that separate themselves were *amongst* His servants; but if they had been *of* His servants, they had not separated themselves. They were amongst us, not of us, saith St. John; and St. Jude proveth it, because they were carnal and had not the Spirit."\*

Neither let our thin ranks ever dishearten us. The church is a "little flock;" but when Elijah complained that he was left alone, seven thousand men had loyally adhered to his God in the midst of national apostacy. The prayers and sympathies of many *hidden* saints may

\* 1 John ii. 19; Jude 19. Hooker. It is vain, therefore, to urge the authority of Augustine, and "the (supposed) unanimous consent of all Christendom for fifteen hundred years," against the certainty of perseverance in true believers, as Barrow does.

similarly uphold us; and in a little while a great multitude will be revealed, whom no man can number, out of every nation and tribe and kindred upon earth, who have all alike repented and trodden the paths of holiness,\* “having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” and who shall eventually enter with us into the heavenly Jerusalem, and unite in its songs of endless and triumphant joy.

II. There are many deceivers in the world, and we must not expect to pursue our pilgrimage, without being more or less disturbed and tempted by their artifices and figments.

*“Beware of false prophets,† which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.‡ Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” (v. 15—20.)*

\* Heb. xii. 14; Isaiah xxxv. 8.

† “Teachers:” Campbell. But see 2 Peter ii. 1.

‡ The apostle warned the elders of Ephesus, that after his departure “grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock.” Acts. xx. 29.

At a later period, Jesus warned His disciples, that such prophets would show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect, as well as the multitude; and He therefore foretold the danger, that they might be prepared to meet it without loss.\* The apostle tells the Corinthians that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light; therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness."†

These pernicious teachers have constantly appeared under some special garb, as "in sheep's clothing," with the names of God, and of righteousness and truth upon their lips, and with outward attractions which irresistibly arrested attention, and which might at first sight have even dazzled and confounded the mature Christian. There could be no security to the careless and superficial. Light nourished by vapours, hovering over low and marshy grounds, sometimes allures a benighted traveller, draws him aside from his road, a vain and weary course, into perilous or impassable morasses, and then suddenly expiring leaves him to darkness and despair. Such has been the illusion produced by false doctrine in almost every age of the church.

The Lord here gives us a test by which prophets may be tried, and by which, if patiently tried, deceivers will be fully unmasked. They may be discerned by

\* Matt. xxiv. 11; 24, 25, &c.

† 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

their fruits:\* unholiness is the characteristic mark of deceit and falsehood. The apostle, therefore, reminded the Corinthians of the various proofs, which they had witnessed in his ministerial course, of his self-denying love, that he might expose the impostors, who troubled and distracted them by their arrogant assumptions.†

This test, however, seems to be scarcely applicable in our day. Currency, at least, is often given to dangerous and subtle error by the apparent earnestness, lofty demeanour, and unblemished reputation of its advocates. Perhaps, we should regard the language of our Lord, as specially addressed to the disciples in the infancy of the church, when many pernicious errors were inculcated by avowed advocates of licentiousness, falsely pretending to be inspired messengers from heaven. For other tests have been graciously vouchsafed to us in the completion of the sacred canon, and in increased facilities to apprehend its statements, and thus try every novel doctrine by this unerring standard. Some precepts in the tenth chapter of this Gospel are evidently of a temporary character, as they were distinctly repealed by the commission given to the apostles to testify of Christ "in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth;"‡ and there is no repetition of this criterion of false teachers in other portions of the New Testament; so that this also was probably personal and local. For

\* See iii. 8—10; xii. 33; Luke iii. 8, 9; xiii. 6—9; John xv. 1—8.

† 2 Cor. xi.

‡ Matt. x. 5; Acts i. 8.

it is idle to assert that "a false doctrine is as much a work as a wicked deed, and as really the out-growth of the inner man;"\* when the question at issue is the falsity or truth of a particular teacher or pretended prophet.

Otherwise we must apply the language of the Lord exclusively to those, who oppose essential principles, and overthrow the very foundation of faith; and we know unhappily too many cases, in which it is distinctly applicable at the present day. Witness the monstrous delusions of Mormonism. But, perhaps, a cautious inquirer might go further, and discern in the overweening self-conceit, haughty self-sufficiency, bitter dogmatism, and scornful contempt of others, exhibited by some innovators, and teachers of strange doctrines, the absence of that meekness, gentleness and humility, the fruits of heavenly love, the invariable marks of true wisdom, which a tree of righteousness, of the Lord's own planting, would necessarily yield; and thus learn to avoid them.

Independently, however, of this, an important practical lesson appears from a reference to the parallel passages to be manifestly involved in the connected illustration. It is not that the good tree is so by nature, or that an evil tree is incapable of change;†

\* Trench p. 323. The Latin Homilist says, cum sit *pejus* male credere quam male agere! Chrysost. Op. T. vii. p. 843.

† Trench p. 324, 325; Chrysost. T. vii. p. 242. Philo speaks of "a tree of virtue, the fruits of which must necessarily be good and noble." De Gigant. § 1.

but that their true character must be clearly evidenced by their fruits in the proper season, whether that be earlier or later. "That which is born of the spirit is spirit."\* Those who have "received the engrafted word,"† and have been planted by the Father upon the banks of that river, "the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God,"‡ must bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, "in all goodness, righteousness and truth."§ A "good tree *cannot* bring forth evil fruit;" or, as St. John|| writes without a figure, "who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." These passages mutually explain each other. It is not that corrupt fruit is never found on a good tree; but that its produce invariably bears a characteristic mark. The grapes may be small, imperfect, or even mouldy; the figs may prematurely decay; much blossom may belie its fair promise, and never produce any fruit; and the crop may be scanty, even when most perfect. But it is impossible to mistake the trees in either case for thorns and thistles. It is thus with the Christian. Not absolutely free from sin,¶ not secure against the effects of temptation;

\* John iii. 6.

† James i. 21.

‡ See Psalm xli. 4; Jerem. xvii. 8; Isaiah lxi. 3; Matt. xv. 13.

§ Gal. v. 22, 23; Phil. i. 11; Eph. v. 9.

|| 1 John iii. 9.

¶ 1 John i. 8.



sometimes overtaken with a grievous fault,\* often doing little in the service of God, and marring his best acts by constitutional frailties; and deeply conscious at all times that his only security is in daily confession to his Father, and in daily application to the blood of sprinkling; and yet sinning not! That is, sin is not his habit, or his characteristic; he *cannot* sin as others do; but his habitual walk is upright and unblameable before men, because he is "a new creature, the workmanship of God," whose grace and Spirit abide in him, restraining and modifying his thoughts and feelings, and constraining him to act and speak aright.

On the other hand, "a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit:" for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." All the actions of the ungodly are evil,† because they lack that principle of faith, and that motive of love, which alone can render any works of ours acceptable to God; and therefore, however plausible they may appear to undiscerning men, judgment impends over them; and the actors must speedily fall under its sword, and perish in its fires. For, as Augustine clearly perceived, it is not acts, or works of righteousness, which may be only "splendid sins," which can render a man righteous; but the character of the man which "determines the value" of his acts, and gives a tone and colour to his works.‡

\* Gal. vi. 1; 1 John ii. 1.

† Because their object or aim is not right, as Clement of Alexandria observed.

‡ See Trench p. 323.

III. We need, therefore, to be on our guard, not only against false prophets, but against the danger of resting in a false and empty profession ourselves. For we are not only liable to be deceived by others, but even to deceive ourselves, and thus to whisper a false peace to our souls, when there is no peace from God. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after."\* Hear the words of Christ.

*"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils?† and in thy name done many wonderful works. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (v. 21—23.)*

The earnest repetition, Lord, Lord, would seem to intimate the profession of more than ordinary regard,‡ and of entire dependence upon the authority of Christ as a Ruler; but something far higher is essential.

\* 1 Tim. v. 24.

† Or "demons:" for δαίμόνια are never confounded with ὁ διάβολος, "the devil," or Satan. As the actions of the demons are expressly distinguished from those of the man possessed, in each Gospel narrative, we cannot deny their existence, as Campbell justly remarks, without admitting that the sacred historians were either deceived themselves in regard to them, or intended to deceive their readers. (Prel. Diss. 6.)

‡ Campbell.

Christianity is not a system, on which we are to speculate with admiring interest, but a message fraught with power to impart life, and to regulate the imparted life of believers. Heaven is a holy place, into which none may be admitted but those whose hearts have been prepared for it on earth, through sanctification of the Spirit; for no others could enjoy its bliss, even if admitted there; for the kingdom is "the inheritance of the saints" alone. The divine will is accomplished in its glorious mansions, at all times, without a doubt, or a murmur, or a hesitating thought; and, as already shown, the children of God, or heirs of that kingdom not only pray that it may be similarly done upon earth, but (in their measure,) through His grace,\* do it themselves!

The bliss set before us cannot be consummated until the appearing of the kingdom, for which we have been taught to long and pray, as a promise of joy. But *in that day* of solemn trial and probation, many fond hopes will be eternally blasted, as many false pleas will be overruled.

In earlier ages men had often recourse to cruel and barbarous rites to appease an offended God, who was generally regarded in the light of a harsh Judge or savage Tyrant; but now the world commonly ridicules

\* For though without Christ we can do nothing acceptably, John xv. 5; Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil. iv. 13. Cf. Psalm lxxi. 16; Isaiah xlv. 24; Zech. iv. 6; Deut. xxxiii. 29; Gen. xlix. 24; 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

such notions, and talks of nothing but the mercy of the Almighty, and therefore takes no heed to the declaration, which warns it of the straitness of the gate, and of the narrowness of the unfrequented way of life, walking presumptuously in that careless self-dependence, which the wonderful progress of art and of scientific discoveries probably tends to promote. The truth is thus continually perverted by one sided views and partial statements.\* But we must neither forget the mercy, nor the holiness of Jehovah.

The judgments daily occurring around us prove, that, however slow to wrath, He cannot be mocked with impunity, or appeased by mere lip service and formal professions.

Even now Christian consistency is essential to the enjoyment of true peace. The traveller, when he reaches the brow of some commanding eminence, anxiously awaits the sunrise, which is to open out to his enraptured gaze a world-renowned prospect, and to light it up with almost unearthly glory; kindling an intense glow of corresponding enthusiasm in his own bosom. But he has often returned disappointed. The prospect was interrupted and marred by mists and clouds, which the sun failed to penetrate; and all was cold and gloomy. The Christian pilgrim has likewise

\* Les grandeurs et les misères de l'homme sont tellement visibles, qu'il faut nécessairement que la véritable religion nous enseigne, qu'il y a en lui quelque grand principe de grandeur, et en même temps quelque grand principe de misère. Pascal Pensées. P. 2, Art. 5.

panted with conscious weakness after an assurance of the truth; and now, perhaps, "the inheritance of the saints" lies stretched before his unveiled eyes, gloriously arrayed in heavenly light and beauty. He has an earnest, a spiritual foretaste, of the kingdom. "The Sun of Righteousness" has risen upon him "with healing in His wings;" the air is pure, and exhilarates his happy spirit; each feature in the prospect is clearly distinguishable. It is the vision of holy faith. But a careless or ungodly walk invariably raises clouds and vapours, which rapidly involve everything in obscurity and gloom. That is a time for humiliation and special prayer. God is hiding His face from His children; and they vainly seek to behold Him.\* But this is the result of His love,† to bring them nearer to Himself, and to give them a clearer insight into the deeper mysteries of His grace.

It seems, therefore, to be a strange and most unscriptural notion to represent assurance as of the essence of justifying faith,‡ or to define the latter, with some eminent writers, as a certain knowledge of God's eternal love towards us, and an assurance of our personal salvation.§ For, eagerly as this privilege of the covenant

\* See Job xxxiv. 29; xxiii. 8, 9; Psalm xxx. 7.

† Isaiah lvii. 17, 18. Rutherford speaks of Christ's "wise love that feedeth us with hunger, and maketh us fat with wants and desertions."

‡ See Job xxiii. 10; Isaiah l. 10.

§ Its proper object is Christ alone. John iii. 15, 16, &c. See Gen. xv. 6.

is to be desired, a variety of circumstances deprives many a devoted Christian of its joys. Deep and not unwise feelings of self-suspicion, a conscience peculiarly sensitive, a temperament nervously anxious, a weakness of faith or of understanding, a temptation of peculiar severity, a chastisement of protracted duration, may hinder him from ascending the spiritual Pisgah, or, when he has done so, may mar his prospect, or dim his vision.

Let us beware, then, how we "make the heart of the righteous sad," and add burdens to their fainting spirits; whilst we warn ardent enthusiasts of the danger of presumption, and of the frequency with which an unholy confidence is maintained, or a false assurance enjoyed. For many "have a name to live," who continually deceive themselves, in the profession of earnest love to a Saviour, upon whose laws they trample without scruple. For their pretended faith neither animates their minds, nor influences their hearts, nor stimulates them to act otherwise than the world around them, whatever may be the extent of their spiritual illumination. But, as the Lord here states, the mere exercise of the gifts of the Spirit (*charismata*) will be vainly pleaded by many in that day, because they are altogether strangers to His abiding influence, or to holiness of conduct. It has been supposed that their plea refers to an earlier stage of their experience, before they fell into sin; but Chrysostom justly rejects this gloss, rightly concluding that the highest spiritual gifts were bestowed upon the unworthy at the first planting of the church

for its greater benefit, or for the fuller manifestation of the divine power.\* The apostle speaks of their unprofitable character in the absence of charity.† Men might prophesy, as Balaam and Saul, or cast out devils and do other miracles, in the name of the Lord, and by virtue of authority and power received from Him, like Judas, and yet “love the wages of unrighteousness,” or cherish feelings of envy, jealousy and malice, and openly disobey the known commandments of God, or seek nothing higher than their own aggrandisement and honour.

The history of Samson affords many solemn warnings in this respect. The law of the Nazarites was ceremonial and symbolical: but it required those under it to be peculiarly holy and circumspect in their walk before Jehovah. As, moreover, Samson was powerfully moved by the Spirit, he wrought extraordinary marvels on behalf of Israel. But no mere ceremonial, or external gift will ensure the sanctification of the soul. He was repeatedly deceived and ensnared by bad company; and though often reproved still refused to learn wisdom.‡ Philistine women were the enemies of his God; but he loved them. He saw, he coveted, he embraced. Caught

\* T. vii. p. 248, 249: T. v. p. 172: 292.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. Augustine frequently warns against the wish “to be signalised in the church for gifts, which always bring with them the danger of puffing up the professor, rather than for graces, which will keep him humble.” See Luke x. 17—20. (Trench.)

‡ See Prov. xxix. 1.

like the poor fly in the spider's web, his struggles only tended to involve him more completely in the power of his deadliest foes. Again and again, he listened with strange infatuation to the allurements of Delilah, and fell wholly under the influence of her bewitching arts, without any suspicion of the ill disguised aim of her importunate solicitations. He was thus brought to a stupid, senseless state, deprived of "the badge of his consecration, the pledge of his strength;" and having departed from his God, he became like a withered branch; and yet he was unaware of the sad change, and thought to do as aforetime, whereas "the Lord was departed from him."\*

In his case, indeed, we believe that repentance ensued, and that the work of grace, seemingly extinguished, was savingly renewed; but we know that this is not invariably the case with gifted professors, or with the subjects of spiritual illumination. We must, therefore, carefully distinguish between the influences and the indwelling of the Spirit. The first are often experienced for a season under the zealous preaching of the Gospel, or in times of peculiar susceptibility to religious impressions, and then constrain many persons to adopt a stricter course of life, to make a distinct profession of religion, to cherish bright hopes, and even in many particulars to act consistently. Their conversation and ministry may often be distinguished by

\* Judges xvi. 20.



peculiar knowledge and spiritual understanding. But sooner or later these effects pass away, and a careless and unholy walk marks the enlightened but unconverted professor. Luxuriant foliage thus often delights the eye, when there is no mature fruit to refresh the traveller, or to recompense the owner; and therefore the barren branch is cut off, and cast into the fire.\* But the Spirit dwells abidingly in the elect; not as an external influence, but as a living principle; not “as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night, a stranger in the land,”† but as a loving guest, or rather a permanent inmate in His own house. His presence is, therefore, manifested by holy fruits; since, as already stated, there is a new creation of every soul, in which the divine love is shed abroad by His power.‡ Here, however, another humbling truth is pressed upon our attention. The divine Guest may be grieved, and His godly motions resisted, as by Samson, so that His indwelling may not be attested as it ought to be by that pervading influence over all the thoughts, words and conduct, which it is His prerogative and delight to exercise. The exhortations of St. Paul strikingly evince this. “Be filled with the Spirit.”§ Cherish His suggestions, spread as it were all your sails, that you may catch every breath of heaven to waft you to the haven of rest; prayerfully watch against every evil thought, which might *quench*|| the spark of holy fire

\* John xv. 2; 6.

† Jerem. xiv. 8.

‡ Rom. v. 5.

§ Eph. v. 18.

|| 1 Thess. v. 19.

which He has kindled, and guard against every light and careless act, or ebullition of temper, which might *grieve*\* a tender, susceptible Friend. The too constant experience of Christians affords a plain and humiliating commentary upon these various admonitions. They mourn so often, because they have *grieved* the Spirit, and thus lost the joy of assured salvation. They live so far below their privileges, because they will not seek with sufficient earnestness to cherish and to realise His fulness. But observe the prayer of the Psalmist under circumstances similar to those of Samson, as it is recorded for the direction and encouragement of penitent backsliders. He deeply felt that he might justly have been cut off from the divine Presence, but whilst he asks for the restoration of his joy, he prays not for the gift or restoration of the Spirit, but that He may not be taken from him, and that his soul might henceforth be upheld (more perfectly) by His bountiful grace.† In the mystical song, indeed, the north and south winds are figuratively invoked to blow upon the garden, with their sharp, invigorating, or soft and gentle breezes, that its spices might flow out;‡ or, that, through the outworking energies of the indwelling Spirit, the actual graces of the church might be exhibited in the sweet savour and holy unction, which at favoured seasons exhilarate all around. It is thus that Christ intercedes for His people, and secures an answer of peace to their humble prayers;

\* Eph. iv. 30.

† Psalm li. 11, 12.

‡ Cant. iv. 16.

whilst the prophet assures us in the Father's name, that He will not hide His face any more from them, because He has poured out His Spirit upon them;\* which is at once an "earnest of their inheritance," and a *seal* of their adoption, "unto the day of redemption," now "ready to be revealed."†

To those, however, who are altogether strangers to this higher gift, that will be a day of unspeakable terrors. "All things that offend, and all who do iniquity" must then be gathered out of the (visible) kingdom,‡ and consumed by the wrath of Jehovah; for all secrets shall then be revealed, when "judgment is laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet,"§ and the righteous are severed for ever from the wicked, the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares, the grain from the chaff, the wise from the foolish, and those that serve God from those that serve Him not;|| that the irreversible sentence may be pronounced upon all sinful and hollow professors, whatever may have been their gifts, or the ardor of their hopes, "*I never knew* you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." For He had never acknowledged them by putting His seal upon them, nor known them by name, as He knows

\* Ezek. xxxix. 29.

† Eph. i. 13, 14; iv. 30; 2 Cor. i. 22; v. 5, with Rom. viii. 23; 1 Peter i. 5. He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. 1 John ii. 17.

‡ Matt. xiii. 41.

§ Isaiah xxviii. 17.

|| Malachi iii. 18, &c.

His sheep, approves their way, and befriends them constantly, as His friends and brethren.\*

But whither shall those depart, who are banished from the source of light and joy and life? Rejected by the Father, disowned by Jesus, they can inherit nothing but shame, condemnation and death, in outer and everlasting darkness. It has been well said, that the thought of exclusion from the presence of Christ, and from the privileges of the kingdom should suffice to fill our minds with terror and dismay, independently of the torments of hell.† But this thought can only operate upon those who have some knowledge of their character, and of the joy which they involve. Our feelings on the subject are therefore applied by Augustine as a sort of test of our spiritual condition. Are we “lovers of God, or merely fearers of hell?” Is it the dread of the consequences of banishment from Christ, and the after pains and penalties, or of the simple banishment and exclusion from His presence, which clothes the sentence, “depart from me,” with terror to our minds?‡ If the latter, surely it is a token for good. Those who shudder above all things at the prospect of being driven away by Jesus from His presence, must really know and love His Name, and must therefore be the objects of His love; and such He will never leave nor forsake.

\* In the ordinary sense of the term Jesus knows all men and all things alike; but in scriptural language knowledge frequently implies favor and approbation. John x. 14; 27; Psalm i. 6; Nahum i. 7; See Heb. ii. 11.

† Chrysost. T. iv. p. 644, &c.

‡ Trench p. 333, 334.

IV. We are warned of all these circumstances of terror, that, ere the day of grace is passed irrecoverably away, we may seek the mercy and compassion of Emmanuel, who came to "save His people from their sins," and who will graciously receive all who come to Him now, and "take away all their iniquity," however gross and manifold.

*"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a\* rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."* (v. 24—27.)

For it is "not the hearers of the law," but "the doers of the law," as already shown, that are justified before God.† St. James forcibly insists upon the danger of self-deception in this particular.‡ The mere hearer resembles a person who beholds his natural face in a glass, and then retires in entire forgetfulness of its report. Those alone are truly wise and blessed, who continue looking into the perfect law of liberty, and

\* "The rock." Campbell. See Luke viii. 6; 13, with Mark iv. 5.

† Rom. ii. 13.

‡ James i. 22—25.

thus attain to self-knowledge; and then, as not forgetful hearers, but active doers of the word, endeavour to correct whatever is amiss in themselves by this unerring standard of conformity to the Lord. For it is their privilege to behold His glory without a veil in the mirror of His Gospel; and it is in the contemplation of this, that the Spirit operates effectually by His transforming energy upon their hearts,\* according to the purpose of His grace.

The present illustration scarcely requires any comment. The most beautiful, or the most commodious and highly finished edifice must fall, if its foundation has been laid without sufficient care. A wise builder is never satisfied, until he has reached the solid rock. There are situations in which the choice of a site is peculiarly important, such as those deep ravines, and fertile valleys, dry and smiling at times, which are liable to sudden inundations of great extent and violence, after tempests which occur unnoticed at a distance. No prudent man would ever think of building in places, where even travellers are sometimes exposed to danger. For the apostle specifies amongst his ministerial trials, as he journeyed from city to city to preach the Gospel, "perils of waters," (or, literally, of rivers.)† For a season, indeed, all might seem to be well, and appearances might deceive both the careless builder and the unwarned traveller; but when the clouds gather, and the tempest

\* See 2 Cor. iii. 18.

† 2 Cor. xi. 26.

bursts, the illusion is rapidly dispelled, as the rushing flood sweeps all before it; so that comfort, security and refuge are alike unattainable by the unhappy victim of his own negligence and folly. Let not an impatient desire to escape present trouble or labour ensnare us; there is but one way of safety: let us go and build upon the rock. Resting upon the Saviour, assured of the truth of His word, and obeying His precept, or, as the proverb testifies, "hearkening unto His voice," we shall "dwell safely and quiet from fear of evil."\* The storms and floods, which threaten and overwhelm the disobedient, shall pass by His sanctuary without injury; for He has become "the author of eternal salvation to all that obey Him."†

The parable of the sower presents the responsibilities of hearers to our notice in more detail.‡ Little will be learnt, and still less retained, where the attention is not stimulated by a sense of need, or where the heart is uninterested. Ezekiel§ was surrounded by gratified hearers. They expressed much affection, as if they were really on the Lord's side; they were charmed with his eloquence and style; but they would not act upon his counsel, nor renounce the covetousness of their hearts.|| This

\* Prov. i. 33.

† Heb. v. 9.

‡ Matt. xiii.; Mark iv.; Luke viii.

§ Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32.

|| Chrysostom repeatedly complains of his hearers. On festivals the church was thronged; at other times, a very inconsiderable number

world is too "full of wantonness and gauds" to give befitting audience to the Gospel. We tread, as it were, on the shifting sand. The fresh footmarks may show that an impression has been made; but as the tide flows again in its wonted course, every trace of these is rapidly and lastingly effaced.

of persons assembled. See T. v. p. 222, on Rom. xii. 20. "Beloved, Christianity is not a mere pastime, or incidental work. We constantly say this, but we effect no good."

---



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE CONCLUSION.

*“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority and not as the Scribes.”* (v. 28, 29.)

THE Scribes were accustomed to take some topic for discussion, or some scripture for particular consideration amongst their disciples, and to offer various interpretations of this, partly symbolical, partly mystical. They seem to have alleged the opposite views of ancient doctors without scruple, and to have allowed the utmost freedom of discussion.\* In contrast with a mode of instruction, so well adapted to the inferior object of simply exercising and disciplining the human mind, the direct, unhesitating and dogmatical teaching of the Lord must necessarily have excited much astonishment.

\* See Conybeare and Howson. *Life and Letters of St. Paul*, V. i. p. 63. Chrysostom first stated the opinions of others on Gal. ii. 11, and then his own, leaving his hearers to choose for themselves. T. v. p. 815.

Truth was no longer announced as a matter of opinion, or of private discussion; because it is not a speculative, but a practical thing, a positive and eternal law. Whatever doubt or hesitation might befit human expositors of philosophical theories, conscious of their liability to err, there could be no place for these, where the Teacher came from heaven to announce the mind of God. But the authority with which He now spoke was not that of a Lawgiver, but of a Witness.

It was thus, that, when He stood before the Roman governor, who sat arrayed in all the pomp and dignity of his office, as the proud representative of the triumphant rulers of the world, and who examined with unwonted curiosity such a mysterious Prisoner, Jesus replied in the loftier dignity and more sublime triumph of meek simplicity and unsullied innocence, and referred without hesitation to the character of His mission. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear *witness* unto the Truth." His very presence struck awe into unprejudiced spectators; and every one who was of the truth heard His voice. They felt it to be divine; for it touched a responsive chord in every divinely inspired soul.

Truth has a two-fold aspect, the objective and the subjective; for we may either regard it in its essential character, in relation to things to be believed, or in its relation to ourselves, as an experience to be realised, or a moral code to be observed. Pilate probably regarded it exclusively in the first point of view, in which he knew

that it had been the object of long and earnest investigation by men of mighty intellect, and of admired virtue, though himself incapable of any personal sympathy with their longing aspirations after the only treasure, which is alike pleasant and precious, or really sufficient to satisfy an immortal spirit. Many of their various systems and conflicting guesses, or elaborate efforts to roll back the veil, which concealed the majesty and exquisite proportions of its divine and eternal form from mortal view, had been beautifully impressed with characteristic marks of their sublime intellects. These were still enforced by the fervid eloquence and lofty imaginations of their authors; but they had all manifestly failed. Vague contradictory speculations were rapidly multiplied; every one had something to add, or to omit, or to qualify and explain; and each successive tide effaced one or more of the subtle schemes, which each successive generation traced so elaborately upon the shifting sand. Plausibility could not satisfy the anxious soul, sparks of human kindling could not really warm the heart; a well defined object was still wanting to give efficacy to the facts asserted, and to the doctrines inculcated. Despair consequently too often succeeded to the baffled anticipations of ardent hope. Many hastily concluded that the prosecution of inquiries, hitherto so barren and inconclusive, was utterly fruitless; and that all positive assertion was more or less unwarrantable and ridiculous. Truth was therefore represented as sunk in a deep unfathomable well; for

even in the dense gloom of scepticism, men instinctively recognised its existence, though practically valueless. Such probably was the feeling of Pilate, as he paused awhile in wonder, and then exclaimed, "what is truth?" and without waiting for a reply passed on, and regarding the accused before him, as a mere day-dreamer and harmless enthusiast, who vainly pretended that He could solve the mystery, hitherto unexplained, and by mere human reason really inexplicable, simply told an infuriated multitude, that he found no fault in Jesus of Nazareth.

And, indeed, had He not come down from heaven to unfold the Eternal and Immutable, and to reveal Him unto us, as far as it was possible for the finite creature to receive the revelation of such transcendent glory, we should be still wandering on the dark mountains in confirmed despair. Human reason has been tested, and failed; speculation has exhausted its resources; it only remains for authority to speak, and to exact implicit faith in "the foolishness of preaching," or in the testimony of an infallible witness, first speaking by Himself, and subsequently by His representatives.

But it was in the second point of view, that the truth was now contemplated by the people, who listened to Jesus with wonder and delight. He had not discussed doctrines, or heavenly and unseen realities; He had made no new revelation of the Godhead; He had unfolded no abstract, mysterious idea. It was *the will* of the Father, which had been declared in simple but

authoritative language; and the consciences of the hearers bore witness to its equity and excellence.

For the immutable distinction between good and evil may be overlaid by the passions and desires of individuals, or by the perverse ingenuity of speculators, or by the prevalent illusions of a corrupt generation; but it cannot be suppressed, or entirely concealed.\* The heathen, as the apostle testifies to the Romans, showed the work of *the law*, to which literally and formally they were strangers, written in their hearts, by the testimony of their own accusing or approving consciences.† Their moral vision might be darkened;

\* Archelaus held that right and wrong were not defined by nature, but by law or the received opinions of mankind, but this notion is justly ridiculed by the celebrated Aristophanes, as opposed to our common instincts. (*Aves* v. 755, 756; *Ranæ* v. 1471, parodying a line of Euripides. Cf. Machon ap. Athen. xiii. p. 502.) No sophistry or art can altogether efface "the work of the law written in the heart." Tacitus forcibly alludes to the inherent odiousness of crime; (*adeo invisæ sunt scelera*. Hist. iii. 31.) Compare a fine passage in Persius, Sat. iii. v. 35—38. Whatever, indeed, may be the variations of opinion prevalent amongst different nations, Hartley justly observes that "the rule of life drawn from the practice and opinions of mankind corrects and improves itself perpetually, till at last it determines entirely for virtue, and excludes all kinds and degrees of vice." Compare Cicero de Fin. iii. 11. (*Quis autem honesta in familia institutus, et educatus ingenue, non ipsa turpitudine, etiam si eum læsura non sit, offenditur? quis animo æquo vidit eum, quem impure ac flagitiose putet vivere? quis non odit sordidos, vanos, leves, futiles?*) De Amicit c. 7. (*Stantes plaudebant in re ficta: quid arbitramur in vera fuisse fautores? facile indicabat ipsa natura vim suam: cum homines, quod facere ipsi non possent, id recte fieri in altero judicarent.*)

† Rom. ii. 15.

iniquity and lust might fill the world with misery; but none have ever been found so utterly degraded, as to receive a professed teacher of what is criminal as a messenger from heaven;\* neither of old was there a single city in the civilised world, according to Philo, in which there dwelt not multitudes, accustomed to celebrate "the ever virgin" virtue.† The apostle, therefore, had no fear of being misunderstood, when he appealed to the moral sense of the Philippian converts. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."‡ He has no new rule to inculcate; no moral code to supersede, whether in Israel or in the Gentile world; but only to free the recognised one from the glosses of misapprehension, and to point to the source of all acceptable obedience.

And thus we find that the enemies of Christianity

\* Il n'est pas dans la nature humaine quelque abruti qu'elle puisse être de croire à un homme qui viendrait enseigner le crime. Voltaire.

† De Mut. Nom. § 36. Si le plus méchant des hommes pouvait être un autre que lui même, il voudrait être homme de bien. Rousseau *Nouv. Hél.* ii. 11.

‡ Philip. iv. 8. Philo says that each virtue involves its own recompense. De Parent. Col. § 10, with de Somn. ii. 5. Barrow similarly remarks that "each religious performance hath happy fruits growing from it, and blissful rewards assigned to it. All pious dispositions are fountains of pleasant streams, which by their confluence do make up a full sea of felicity." (V. i. p. 70.)

were accustomed to oppose the truth by constantly accusing its advocates of vicious and immoral conduct,\* thus instinctively recognising the unwritten law of God themselves, at the very time when their own customs were most diametrically opposed to its holy requirements.

How, then, could the multitude resist the authority with which Jesus spoke? A secret and unaccountable influence often pervades a congregation, even where the majority may be unconverted, and utter strangers to any salutary impressions, when a man of prayer speaks from the heart with holy and spiritual affection, although he uses the most ordinary language, and never broaches any novel thought, and this simply because the unction of the Spirit is upon him. And here Emmanuel, the Prophet, of whom Moses wrote, to whom the Father gave the Spirit without measure, was addressing the people, who had flocked to Him from all the surrounding country, and even in part from more remote localities, under the conviction that He had power to work the most stupendous miracles, and who were themselves eye witnesses of such power. They were, however, astonished rather than converted, as a warning to us.

\* See Justin M. Apol. i. 70; ii. 51; (A.D. 153.) Athenag. Legat. c. 5, (A.D. 178); Tertull. Apol. c. 2; de Cult. Fæm. c. 4; Minucius Felix (A.D. 210) &c. Such reports are said to have been actively propagated by malicious Jews. Justin Dial. p. 234: (ed. Colon 1686.) Cf. Tertull. ad Nat. i. 14. But Pliny clearly ascertained their utter falsity, and the innocent simplicity of the Christians, whom he persecuted in Bithynia, (A.D. 102 or 109,) in the reign of Trajan. Ep. x. 97. Cf. 1 Peter iii. 13—17.

Nothing less than Almighty energy can transform the soul, or quicken the careless sinner. Many forsook Jesus, after some experience of His mercy and wisdom, because they could not *bear* what seemed to them "hard sayings," or really "receive the things of the Spirit." Whilst, therefore, we rejoice, that we have no uncertain glosses or traditions before us, but masses of pure gold,\* the words of eternal truth, and of divine wisdom, we must remember with holy awe, that it is the Spirit alone, who can quicken us, or enable us to apprehend them eagerly, thankfully, and profitably.

Our Teacher is also the Saviour of all that believe in Him. Following His guidance, bowing to His authority, and upheld by His all-sufficient grace, we shall be enabled to triumph over all our spiritual foes, and to glorify Him here on earth, and whether we live or die to bask continually in the sunshine of His love.

It has been said that "what was religion enough for the time of the Patriarchs, or the Prophets, or the Apostles, or the Reformers, or the Puritans, is not enough for the heightened consciousness of mankind to-day; and that when the world thinks in lightning, it is not proportionate to pray in lead." Such is the covert infidelity of the day,† which so often clothes its Titanic thoughts in devout and mystic language. For

\* See a beautiful image in Chrysost. T. v. p. 397.

† Let sceptics pause, and ponder well the remarks of Pascal. *Pensées*, Part 2, de Art. 4, § 12, &c. But the Bible itself is its own best witness and interpreter.



our part, we shall count ourselves happy to be despised as weak and childish by men wise in their own conceit; for we would rather suffer the greatest indignities, with Paul of Tarsus and the son of Zebedee, for giving honour to Emmanuel, than attain to the highest glory in this world for attempting to scale the heights of heaven on the ladders of science, or to measure the depths of the Eternal by the uncertain plummets of human reason.

---

## APPENDIX.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER III.

AS the Bible is a series of distinct, and in some respects of independent, treatises, it seems evident that in subordination to its grand and all pervading object of exhibiting Christ in His grace and in His glory, each separate book must embody a special moral, or a special lesson of spiritual wisdom, and that the distinct apprehension of this central idea or object will not only throw a steadier light over all its pages, but also enable us to appreciate the unity of the whole volume, and the paramount excellence, and invariable purposes of divine revelation, more highly.

It may not be unprofitable to illustrate this by a series of references to the historical portions of the Old Testament.

The five earliest books of the Pentateuch seem to be intimately connected together, and to embrace a most comprehensive system of faith and practice, in successive stages. In Genesis we are presented, first, objectively with a striking view of the gracious Providence of the Creator, evolving good out of evil, and overruling all things to the eventual benefit of His church, both collectively and individually,<sup>1</sup> thus teaching us to cast away all anxious thought for the morrow;<sup>2</sup> and secondly, subjectively, the faith of His people,<sup>3</sup> in blissful communion

<sup>1</sup> Strikingly illustrating Rom. viii. 28.

<sup>2</sup> See on Matt. vi. 25—34.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xi. 4—22. Justification by faith, and the object of that justifying faith, not the word of God generally, but the promise of The Seed, contrary to the order of nature, is stated Gen. xv. 6, and thence alleged Rom. iv.; Gal. iii. 6—14. The birth of Isaac was symbolical of the resurrection, according to the view of Chrysostom, grounded on Rom. iv. 18—25.

with a heavenly Friend, walking with Him,<sup>1</sup> as strangers and pilgrims, who groan, and yet patiently wait,<sup>2</sup> amidst hopes long deferred, for the full enjoyment of a distant promise, whilst they are cheered by frequent earnestness of His glory, and of complete deliverance at the last; even as the Lord taught His disciples to pray for the Advent of His Kingdom. The trials of the Patriarchs were great; but they were sustained by an Almighty arm, shielded<sup>3</sup> by Infinite love, and ultimately "brought out of trouble;"<sup>4</sup> and each successively died in hope and peace;<sup>5</sup> with the exception of Enoch, who, like Elijah at a subsequent period,<sup>6</sup> was translated that he should not see death, as an imperfect type of that glorious day, when the living saints shall be transfigured at the Advent of the Messiah.<sup>7</sup> But Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ;<sup>8</sup> and as aged Simeon subsequently contemplated the salvation of the Lord with rapture, when holding the divine Infant in his arms,<sup>9</sup> and Stephen was invigorated by a vision of his exalted Redeemer in the hour of his peril,<sup>10</sup> Jacob also on the very eve of approaching dissolution enjoyed a

<sup>1</sup> Gen. v. 22; 24; vi. 9; xvii. 1; xlviii. 15, with James ii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 19—25.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xv. 1. See Psalm lxxxiv. 11; Luke xii. 6, 7; x. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. xlviii. 16; Psalm xxxiv. 19; Prov. xi. 8; xii. 13; 2 Cor. i. 9, 10, &c.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. xlix. 33; Isaiah lvii. 1, &c.

<sup>6</sup> Tradition taught Pascal to anticipate their combat in the latter day with Antichrist. They have been often identified with the two witnesses of the Apocalypse; xi. 3—12; but we must still wait for a satisfactory interpretation of that Book. The three woes are all evidently future, closely consecutive, and having no relation to Saracens, Turks, or Reformers. "*Pace Catonis dixerim.*" They occur under the three last trumpets.

<sup>7</sup> See 1 Cor. xv. 51—54; 1 Thess. iv. 13—17.

<sup>8</sup> John viii. 56; Gen. xxii.

<sup>9</sup> Luke ii. 25—32.

<sup>10</sup> Acts vii. 55, 56.

glimpse<sup>1</sup> of the yet greater consummation announced in Eden,<sup>2</sup> when all the enemies of man shall be subdued, and "the redemption of the body"<sup>3</sup> shall be realised by the whole united church of patriarchs, prophets and apostles,<sup>4</sup> in the city of God,<sup>5</sup> in the lasting enjoyment of consummated *salvation*.<sup>6</sup>

The central ideas of the book of Exodus are redemption, legislation, and the indwelling of a covenant God in a redeemed and obedient people, to whom His power, sovereignty, wisdom, faithfulness and love are there impressively revealed, in a series of marvellous acts and visions of glory. The law was not enacted, until the Israelites were delivered from their bondage. For it is not man who works, and merits a recompense; but man *who* "stands still, and sees the *salvation* of God,"<sup>7</sup> and is thus constrained to glorify Him as "his strength and his song."<sup>8</sup> Jehovah commands us to observe His law, or to do His will, not in order to our redemption, but because He has redeemed us, and calls Himself our God; even as Jesus first chose His disciples, and treated them as friends, and then charged them to prove their love by their obedience.<sup>9</sup> Sin, however, soon broke out in Israel, and the first tables were broken in pieces; but pardon was vouchsafed on the

<sup>1</sup> As intimated by that abrupt apostrophe, Gen. xlix. 18; "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." Compare Isaiah xxv. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iii. 15; Rom. xvi. 20.

<sup>3</sup> "The adoption;" Rom. viii. 23; that is, the public acknowledgment of the Sons of God, now *hidden*, or unknown to the world. See Heb. ii. 13; Matt. x. 32; Rom. viii. 19; 1 John iii. 2, &c.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. xi. 39, 40; Daniel xii. 13; Mal. iii. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. xiii. 14; xi. 16.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Peter i. 5; Heb. ix. 28; Rom. xiii. 11; viii. 18. See above p. 20; 24, 25; 211—213.

<sup>7</sup> Exod. xiv. 13. Cf. 2 Chron. xx. 15; 17.

<sup>8</sup> Exod. xv. 2; with Isaiah xii. 2; Psalm cxviii. 14; 21; Rev. xv. 3.

<sup>9</sup> John xv. 15, 16; xiv. 15—24; xv. 9, 10; 14. See also Acts v. 32; Heb. v. 9.

intercession of Moses,<sup>1</sup> to whom Jehovah now revealed His goodness, or that gracious Name,<sup>2</sup> (His harmonised perfections in Christ Jesus.) thenceforth pleaded so earnestly by His people, at His throne of grace.<sup>3</sup> Upon this the law was renewed, and the tabernacle set up with earnest zeal, in exact conformity to the heavenly reality, and the precepts of the Lord. The history closes in the exhibition of perfect obedience, and the consequent enjoyment of full privilege.<sup>4</sup> It is the first love of a ransomed church,<sup>5</sup> as dutiful hearers of the word.

But as obedience to the whole law was impossible through the weakness of the flesh, and that had a farther end, even the bringing in of all men guilty before God, and the display of the exceeding sinfulness of sin,<sup>6</sup> the book of Leviticus presents to our notice a solemn picture of the unsullied purity of God, and of the awful depravity of the world, and at the same time unfolds a typical provision for the pardon of transgression, and for the purification of Israel, in the richest details. It intimates, therefore, the necessity of the utmost watchfulness, and of an habitual sense of the divine presence, because Jehovah "will be sanctified in them that come nigh Him,"<sup>7</sup> and as "a consuming fire" exacts a fearful penalty from profane and sinful worshippers;<sup>8</sup> whilst it clearly points out to those who are conscious of guilt, a way of perfect reconciliation and peace.<sup>9</sup> Doctrine in

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxii. and xxxiii. For Jesus, whom he typified, is not only a propitiation for our sins, but also our living advocate. 1 John ii. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxxiii. 19; xxxiv. 5—7. The paradox is explained, Rom. iii. 25, 26. See Psalm lxxxv.

<sup>3</sup> Num. xiv. 17—20 Josh. vii. 9; Psalm xxv. 7; 11; and see Ezek. xx. &c.

<sup>4</sup> See Hagg. ii. 5. Matt. xxviii. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Jerem. ii. 2, and Rev. ii. 4.

<sup>6</sup> See Rom. v. 20; vii. 7, 8; Gal. iii. 19; Rom. vii. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Levit. x. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ib. vers. 1, 2; Heb. xii. 28, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Especially in the type of the Scape Goat. Levit. xvi. with Isaiah liii.

parables, or in outward ordinances and symbols, was peculiarly suited to the oriental mind. It is not immediately recognised in this form; but, when once discovered, it becomes the more emphatic and instructive.<sup>1</sup> The Israelites in general could not look beyond the letter;<sup>2</sup> and *therefore* their consciences were never purged, nor their hearts really elevated to God.<sup>3</sup> But "the true circumcision" were enlightened by the Spirit of God,<sup>4</sup> and enjoyed the spiritual privilege,<sup>5</sup> which was the real end of all their temporary ordinances, so clearly anticipatory of Gospel truths, however valueless in themselves. At the same time the Levitical law prescribes that daily sacrifice of self, in all its manifold relations, which the redeemed must ever delight to present, through His grace, without the leaven of malice and wickedness, or any impure motive, as a most acceptable thank-offering unto a God of love.<sup>6</sup> And thus the prominent idea of the book, subjectively considered, is exemplified by the declaration subsequently enforced by St. Peter, as the ground of his own earnest exhortation to his fellow disciples, now become "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,"<sup>7</sup> by whose precious blood they have been redeemed, to walk in fear and spiritual obedience;—"be ye

<sup>1</sup> See Prov. i. 5, 6; Mark iv. 34, &c.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 12—16.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. ix. 8—10; x. 1—4; 8—11.

<sup>4</sup> As the Psalmist prayed to be, Psalm cxix. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Distinctly realising full pardon, and a conscience thoroughly purged from sin, not by the shadowy type, but through faith in the antetype. Psalm li. 7—12; 16, (= Heb. x. 8, 9); xxxii. 1, 2. It is strangely forgotten by many, that the truth unfolded by the apostle to the Hebrews had been unfolded by the Holy Spirit before the Advent of Jesus to every spiritual Israelite.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. xii. 1, &c. Strictly speaking this may be involved in the obedience required by the law in Exodus; but it is here prominently brought out.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Peter ii. 5.

holy, for I am holy.”<sup>1</sup> For this evidently comprehends far more than the highest tone of morality, which has ever prevailed amongst the unconverted; since it necessarily involves a “diligent keeping of the heart, out of which are the issues of life,”<sup>2</sup> and a careful regulation of the thoughts, affections and feelings, in order to maintain that internal purity, “unspotted from the world,”<sup>3</sup> to which the Lord has annexed the special promise of seeing God,<sup>4</sup> and the enforcement of which seems to be the main object of His Discourse on the Mount.<sup>5</sup>

Sin, however, must entail misery, even in this life; for “whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.”<sup>6</sup> Though it may be often concealed, and its effects are seldom immediately manifested, it must sooner or later prove a scourge to us, and a curse.<sup>7</sup> The book of Numbers illustrates this truth by its many painful records of apostacy and rebellion in Israel, notwithstanding all the privileges, and deliverances already vouchsafed to them; and by its awful details of the consequent judgments inflicted upon them. It further exhibits the deplorable frailty of man, even at his best estate. Miriam and Aaron, and even Moses<sup>8</sup> himself successively fell, and incurred the displeasure

<sup>1</sup> Levit. xi. 44; xix. 2; 1 Peter i. 15—19. Campbell says the scope of the (first) passage in Leviticus is to avoid ceremonial impurities, but the nineteenth chapter is inconsistent with this notion. It comprehends the most heterogeneous precepts, but some of these most expressively enforce a law of perfect love.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. iv. 23.

<sup>3</sup> James i. 27, with Rev. iii. 4, and 1 John ii. 15, 16.

<sup>4</sup> See on Matt. v. 8, with Acts xv. 9; 1 Peter i. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Levit. xix. 17, 18, with Matt. v. 44.

<sup>6</sup> Gal. vi. 7, 8. See 1 Tim. v. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Numb. xxxii. 23. The particular sin pointed out is that of *selfish indifference* to their brethren in Israel, to which those first settled might be strongly tempted. The truth, “be sure your sin will find you out,” is strikingly illustrated in the history of Abraham, Gen. xxi. 11, of the family of Jacob, Gen. xlii. 21; xliv. 16, and of David, 2 Sam. xi., &c.

<sup>8</sup> See Num. xii.; xx. 7—13; xxvii. 12—14; and above on ver. 5.

of God; thus teaching us to "cease from man," and to appreciate more highly the Gospel of Christ, and the promises of His grace. The Israelites in general were always murmuring and doubting, turned aside by "an evil heart of unbelief,"<sup>1</sup> not only exasperating a most meek and disinterested ruler, whose love seemed inexhaustible, but provoking a most gracious God, full of longsuffering and patience, to destroy them in the wilderness. "Many were called, but few chosen;" for the way of life is narrow, and "few there be that find it."<sup>2</sup> These sorrowful and humiliating thoughts are salutary; for those who lay them to heart will pray, and prayer shall never be in vain.<sup>3</sup> Even then Joshua and Caleb "clave unto the Lord with full purpose of heart," and *followed* Him steadfastly, boldly pleading His cause at the risk of their lives; and therefore they alone of all that generation inherited the blessing, which belongs to the people of God.<sup>4</sup> Singleness of mind is ever essential to peace.

It is, moreover, in this book that we meet with the most striking types of the grand truths of the Gospel; and these stand out the more brilliantly from the gloomy darkness of the ground, in which they are set. Aaron, for instance, puts on incense, and runs into the congregation: he stands between the dead and the living; his atonement is accepted; the plague is stayed.<sup>5</sup> The fiery serpents destroy the murmurers, but the image of the destroyer lifted up in the midst of the camp is a means of immediate relief to those bitten Israelites, who look upon it.<sup>6</sup>

The book of Deuteronomy again exhibits the manner in which the gracious privileges vouchsafed to Israel by distinguishing mercy were

<sup>1</sup> See Heb. iii. and iv.; 1 Cor. x. 1—11; Psalm xcix. 8; Jude.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xx. 16; xxii. 14; vii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> See on chap. vii. 7—11.

<sup>4</sup> Num. xiii. 30; xiv. 6—10; 24. See Acts xi. 23; xiv. 22, and above on Matt. vi. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Num. xvi. 46—48.

<sup>6</sup> Num. xxi. 8, 9. See Isaiah xlv. 22; John iii. 14—16; 2 Cor. v. 21.



abused by the multitude. The divine love to the people was altogether independent of themselves; it is set forth by the aged lawgiver with the utmost earnestness, as objectively the grand theme on which the church of all ages unites to expatiate with peculiar delight.<sup>1</sup> But they lacked that true circumcision of the heart, which is demanded of all, and which is promised in the latter days to a penitent and converted people;<sup>2</sup> who shall "sit down at His feet and receive His words,"<sup>3</sup> as His beloved ones, whom He will keep by His power, and uphold in "His everlasting arms," as their Eternal Refuge, expelling or subduing all their foes,<sup>4</sup> "to the praise of His own glorious grace!"<sup>5</sup> Thus Christ "came unto His own, and His own received Him not,"<sup>6</sup> for until His Spirit quickens individuals, all their outward privileges are necessarily unavailing. "The children of the promise alone are counted for the seed," and blessed as "the Israel of God," because "born after the Spirit;"<sup>7</sup> and it is only in the light of this truth, that we can understand the language of Moses.

Subjectively also the reiterated precepts of the law are here peculiarly instructive; for their special value in our spiritual warfare is strikingly exhibited by the fact, that, when the Lord was tempted in the wilderness, He invariably replied to all the suggestions of Satan by reference to what is written, and that too in this book of Deuteronomy.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Deut. vii. 7, 8; x. 15; xxxiii. 3; 12; Jerem. xxxi. 3; Mal. i. 2; 1 John iv. 8—10, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. x. 16; xxx. 1—6. See Jerem. iv. 4; Ezek. xxxvi. 26; Rom. ii. 28, 29; Phil. iii. 3; Gal. vi. 14—16. The Lord refers to this, John iii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 3. The last clauses are illustrated by Luke x. 39—42; the first, by Jerem. xxxi. 3; John xiii. 1; Eph. ii. 4, 5, and Rom. i. 7; 2 Thess. ii. 13; the second, by John x. 27—30.

<sup>4</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 27. See Isaiah liv. 17; Rom. viii.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. i. 6, &c.

<sup>6</sup> John i. 11.

<sup>7</sup> See Rom. ix. 6—8; John i. 12, 13; Gal. vi. 16; iv. 28—31.

<sup>8</sup> See Matt. iv. 1—11; Luke iv. 1—12, with Eph. vi. 17.

The true Israelite could not wilfully transgress its precepts, nor despise its promises. And how can we now doubt the fulness and unchangeable character of this moral directory, or the unimpaired temper of this sword of the Spirit?

In the book of Joshua our attention is fixed upon the faithfulness of God to His promises,<sup>1</sup> and His vindication of His own Name from dishonour and reproach. Not by the works of the law, but by the grace of Jesus alone, can the true Israelites inherit the land of promise. Under His banner every enemy must be subdued. But if at any time a promise seems to fail, it is owing to some cherished sin, which, as in the case of Achan,<sup>2</sup> is by such failure designedly brought to light, and punished by the rod of fatherly correction, that the believer may be humbled, and then restored. For the Lord demands the service of the whole heart;<sup>3</sup> and Joshua successfully enforced the renunciation of besetting sin, and the renewal of a voluntary covenant to *serve God alone*, by reminding the people of their happy experience in times past.<sup>4</sup> "We love Him, because He first loved us."<sup>5</sup>

The book of Judges presents a very different picture of degeneracy and corruption, the usual fruits of unbelief; but a merciful God renewed the tokens of His love to Israel; for His Spirit raised up judges and deliverers to revive His work amongst them, whenever they returned to Him with humble supplication. Or if He seemed at any time to reject their suit, it was only to deepen their humility, and to stir them up to more earnest importunity, that His sympathy might be freely manifested in their deliverance.<sup>6</sup> The concluding chapters of the book seem further designed to indicate the value of a good government, and of the divine ordinance of a watchful magistracy,

<sup>1</sup> Josh. xxiii. 14. See Numb. xxiii. 19; 2 Cor. i. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Josh. vii.

<sup>3</sup> Prov. xxiii. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Josh. xxiv. See on Matt. vi. 24.

<sup>5</sup> 1 John iv. 19. See 2 Cor. vii. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Judges x. 9—16, illustrating Matt. xv. 21—28. See on Matt. vii. 7—11.

as essential to the peace and comfort of society.<sup>1</sup> But as anarchy is a curse to a community, it proves the same spiritually to the souls of individuals. Unless the presiding mind regulate, and control, or keep under our feelings, appetites and affections, there can be no enjoyment of true peace;<sup>2</sup> for vice will be rampant.

The brief history of Ruth is peculiarly interesting. Goethe said that we have nothing so lovely in the whole range of epic and idyllic poetry. The failure of the Jews already prepared for the admission of the Gentiles into the covenant of God.<sup>3</sup> This is typified by the incorporation of a Moabitess into the commonwealth of Israel, from which she would have been nationally excluded with peculiar strictness; and yet she was not only admitted into it, but chosen by divine Providence to become the grandmother of Jesse, the father of David.<sup>4</sup> Her devotion to her mother-in-law,<sup>5</sup> and her simple confidence in *her God*,<sup>6</sup> could not fail to secure to her a rich reward, both temporally and spiritually. She had first sought "the kingdom of God and His righteousness," or all that Israel understood and enjoyed of these, and other things were added to her, far beyond her expectations or desires. It is still the same with all that act in a similar spirit.<sup>7</sup>

The grand lesson of the first book of Samuel seems to be the

<sup>1</sup> Judges xvii. 6; xviii. 1; xix. 1; xxi. 25; with Rom. xiii. 1—6.

<sup>2</sup> See on Matt. vi. 22, 23.

<sup>3</sup> See Rom. xi. 11, &c.

<sup>4</sup> Observe that in the Gospel of St. Matthew (written for the use of Jews more especially,) the names of four women occur in the genealogy of the Son of David; namely, the notorious Tamar and the wife of Uriah, Rahab and Ruth, or two persons of sinful character and two believing foreigners. Chrysostom notes this, and says that the power of self-abasement is very glorious to the Most High. T. vii. p. 8 and 21. How humbling to the Jew, how encouraging to the penitent is the simple fact.

<sup>5</sup> Ruth i. 10—18. See Psalm xlv. 10, 11; Luke xiv. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Ruth ii. 12. See Heb. x. 35; 1 Tim. iv. 8—10.

<sup>7</sup> See on Matt. vi. 32.

honour realised by all who honour God, and the contempt and misery awaiting all who dare to despise Him. For this rule of divine government is strikingly illustrated alike by the history of Samuel and David on the one hand, and of Eli and Saul on the other.<sup>1</sup> It was fearfully forgotten by the hypocritical Pharisees, who sought the praise and honour of men, as if they had no apprehension of the divine wrath, nor desire to enjoy the divine favor.<sup>2</sup>

The second book of Samuel completes the memoir of David, and is characterised by the impartial faithfulness, with which the conduct of the king is recorded, and even his secret sins disclosed. Jeshurun waxed wanton in prosperity;<sup>3</sup> and the pious shepherd-boy became a self-indulgent king. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."<sup>4</sup> The Lord Himself enjoins us to pray that we may not be led into temptation.<sup>5</sup> But domestic troubles and the sword pursued him, who had so basely violated the honour of a happy couple, and slain a faithful servant. "The beginning of strife (and, indeed, of sin generally) is as when one letteth out water."<sup>6</sup> We must guard against the wandering eye, and the unholy thought: Lord, "deliver us from evil;"<sup>7</sup> if we have fallen, suffer us not to reap as we have sown,<sup>8</sup> nor to lie still wallowing in the mire; but "correct us with judgment, and not in thine anger, lest thou bring us to nothing."<sup>9</sup> Such was the experience of David. Affliction was sanctified to his soul. The penitent had no trust in outward symbols, however glorious, but only in the unchangeable God of the Ark.<sup>10</sup> He had smarted under the rod

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 30. See John xii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> See on Matt. vi. 1, &c.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. xxxii. 15.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. x. 12; and see ix. 24—27.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. vi. 13, with xxvi. 41.

<sup>6</sup> Prov. xvii. 14.—*Principiis obsta. Horace.*

<sup>7</sup> See on Matt. vi. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Gal. vi. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Jerem. x. 24.

<sup>10</sup> Contrast 1 Sam. iv. 3—11, with 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.

of men, yea, even of his own darling Absalom; but he could humbly cast himself upon the infinite compassion of his God,<sup>1</sup> who in wrath remembers mercy,<sup>2</sup> and freely pardons all who flee to Him for refuge, and comforts those who mourn before Him,<sup>3</sup> in deep contrition of soul.

A history of solemn interest is unfolded in the first book of Kings, illustrating the proverb,<sup>4</sup> or the inseparable connection between national prosperity and national righteousness. A united and glorious kingdom was dismembered through sin, and a succession of crimes and calamities, (only relieved by a few gleams of transitory revival,) was the inevitable result of apostacy from Jehovah. But "a remnant according to the election of grace,"<sup>5</sup> often *hidden*, but never compromising the truth, or attempting to "serve two masters,"<sup>6</sup> still survived. The name of Elijah ("my God,<sup>7</sup> Jah") intimates the faith and piety of his parents. The most unlikely means are adopted to secure the servants of God, to teach us never to distrust the Providence of a Heavenly Father, or to despair of succor in our distress;<sup>8</sup> whilst the impatience and fear of the prophet himself after all his wonderful experience demonstrates our entire dependence upon divine grace for every excellence, and the real evil inseparable from humanity in this life.<sup>9</sup>

The second book of Kings concludes the sad history; but it exhibits the marvellous compassion of Jehovah, in granting a respite

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xxiv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Habak. iii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> See on Matt. v. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Prov. xiv. 34.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Kings xix. 18; Rom. xi. 2—5.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings xviii. 21. See on Matt. vi. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Jehovah: see Psalm lxviii. 4.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Kings xvii. 9. A widow, made willing in the day of His power, provides for the sustenance of the prophet! See on Matt. vi. 25, &c.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Kings xix. Compare James v. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 10; 2 Cor. ii. 16; iii. 5; xii. 9, 10; and on Matt. vii. 11.

to the guilty for the sake of their fathers, and of the covenant made with them.<sup>1</sup> The innocent blood shed by Manasseh brought final ruin upon an ungodly people: for the measure of their iniquities (nationally) was thus filled up, and vengeance could be no longer delayed.<sup>2</sup> But if there had been no resurrection, nor future judgment, how could a holy Judge have suffered His saints to fall into the hands of the wicked? He counts their blood precious,<sup>3</sup> but He receives them to Himself;<sup>4</sup> and the persecutions which they endured were patiently sustained through faith,<sup>5</sup> the object of which was a God of truth, "the exceeding great reward" of His people,<sup>6</sup> which can only be fully realised hereafter. Their endurance, patience and faith, as we have already seen, are set before the disciples of Jesus for their special encouragement,<sup>7</sup> and yet so marvellous are the ways of Jehovah, that the wicked persecutor himself repented and found pardon.<sup>8</sup> In like manner, Stephen fell asleep in the spirit of prayer, amid a storm of hostile fury, and Paul obtained mercy.

There is much recorded in the first book of Chronicles of a merely local and temporary character, of no apparent value, and seemingly unsuitable to a book designed for all ages and for all nations, of which every jot and title is pronounced so inviolable. But are we not thus taught, that as men and citizens, though strangers and pilgrims upon earth, we have local duties to perform, and temporal studies to prosecute, by which we may profitably serve our generation, and thus act to the glory of God, even in seeming trifles? The attention paid

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xiii. 22—24.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4. See Isaiah i. 15, "Your hands are full of blood;" to show the common guilt of king and people. The ten tribes had been previously carried away. Compare Matt. xxiii. 29—36.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm lxxii. 14; cxvi. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm xlix. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. xi. 33—40.

<sup>6</sup> See Heb. xi. 6; with ver. 26; and Gen. xv. 1. Isaiah is said to have been sawn asunder by Manasseh.

<sup>7</sup> See Matt. v. 10—12.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Chron. xxxiii. 10—13.

to *order* by David is very notable. But it ever reigns in the natural world, and as it is "lovely and of good report" amongst men, it cannot be of trivial importance in the church of God.<sup>1</sup> Socially and collectively, whatever may be the security of individuals, we are powerless without discipline and order, whilst "the light of the world"<sup>2</sup> seems to wane, or to be eclipsed, and thus fails to fulfil its appointed office amongst a benighted race.

The active and laborious preparation for building the temple involved great self-denial;<sup>3</sup> but this was submitted to with cheerfulness<sup>4</sup> by men zealous for the glory of God, that "His Name might be hallowed." Solomon and the princes of Israel are stimulated to carry on the work with all their energies by a grateful sense of the privileges vouchsafed to them,<sup>5</sup>—the usual evangelical motive.<sup>6</sup> Let not Christians be less active. Others may reap what we have sown; but at last all the labourers shall rejoice together.<sup>7</sup> A spiritual temple is to be erected, and we are graciously permitted to co-operate in this work. Every one can bring something: let not sloth or self-indulgence deter us from contributions to the Missionary work, or from exertion for the benefit of others. "Arise and be doing, and the Lord will be with you."<sup>8</sup> The time is short, and souls are perishing. You have every encouragement to pray: for Jabez's accepted petitions sweetly attest the success which awaits all those, who "set their heart and their soul to seek the Lord their God;"<sup>9</sup> and Jesus lays many special promises before us,<sup>10</sup> that we may never doubt.

<sup>1</sup> Coloss. ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> See on Matt. v. 14—16.

<sup>3</sup> See 1 Chron. xxii.; xxviii.; xxix.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Chron. xxix. 9. God loveth a cheerful giver. 2 Cor. ix. 7.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Chron. xxii. 17—19.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 8, 9; Matt. x. 8.

<sup>7</sup> John iv. 36—38.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Chron. xxii. 16; Eccles. ix. 10; xi. 1, 6; Psalm cxxvi. 5, 6; 1 Cor. xv. 58.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Chron. iv. 10; xxii. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Matt. vii. 7—11, &c.

The second book of Chronicles strikingly illustrates the excellency of steadfast faith and implicit confidence in 'God, by various examples. But temporary revivals under a few holy princes could not arrest the progress of national corruption; and all warnings and all merciful invitations proved alike ineffectual to disobedient hearers.<sup>1</sup> "There was no remedy," because the only means of salvation was wilfully neglected; the longsuffering of Jehovah was thus exhausted; for the salt had lost its savour, and could not be re-salted; and the temple erected with such labour, and beautified by the manifestation of His Presence, when consecrated by prayer and praise, was spoiled of its treasures, utterly forsaken and consumed.<sup>2</sup> The flood swept away the ruins!

Individually, moreover, we learn from the historical details of this book, that backsliders, like Asa, bring trouble upon themselves; that diligence is essential to real enjoyment; and that although the divine promise secures the elect, it is only in the exercise of godly fear.<sup>3</sup>

The two following books refer to a revival in Israel, and to the return of Judah from captivity. Cyrus and other Persian monarchs were the chosen instruments of God to effect His gracious purpose; but prayer was the means by which His servants prevailed in their successive applications for aid to these princes. The pious Ezra, the scribe, obediently investigated, and earnestly inculcated the divine law.<sup>4</sup> He devoutly recognises *the hand of God*, which ever rested upon him "for good,"<sup>5</sup> and caused him to prosper in all his under-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15—17.

<sup>2</sup> See 2 Peter iii. 9, 15; Matt. xxi. 19; Mark xi. 13, 14.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Chron. xv. 2, &c. See Heb. x. 38, 39; John xv. 1—6; 1 John ii. 27, 28; Jerem. xxxii. 40; 1 Peter i. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ezra vii. 10. See Matt. xiii. 52; 1 Tim. iv. 15; Psalm cxix. 97; 165, &c.

<sup>5</sup> Ezra vii. 6; 28; viii. 18. "The hand of God is a symbol of His power, or of the Spirit." See 1 Chron. xxviii. 12 with 19, where the two expressions *hand* and *Spirit* occur as equivalent. Cf. Zech. iv. 6, and Luke i. 15 with 66; and also Acts xi. 21.



takings.<sup>1</sup> This has ever been the unfailing strength and portion of His people. None could hurt them, as long as they prayerfully relied upon His promise; and the consistency of Ezra, who was ashamed to disgrace his profession before the world, by seeking to man for aid in an emergency, was abundantly honoured by Jehovah.<sup>2</sup> Why, then, should the disciples of Jesus ever distrust the faithfulness and love of a Heavenly Father?<sup>3</sup>

Nehemiah, as a *civil* ruler, engaged in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and was much tried by the scoffs and machinations of active enemies: but godly fear was the characteristic principle on which he acted, and by which he prevailed. Faithful in the discharge of his arduous duties, he relied exclusively on the mercy of God, whose law and Sabbath, so beneficial in a civil and political point of view, no less than in a religious one, he earnestly vindicated from profanation. Work and warfare seemed to be equally necessary: for the builders had their swords girded on their side; and the trumpeter attended Nehemiah to summon the whole host at once to any point, which the enemy might venture to assail.<sup>4</sup> Such a state of preparation sufficed for their security. So let it be with us. Working for the good of the church, seeking the edification of our own souls, let us ever stand with our loins girded, clad in the whole armour of God, and hasten eagerly to lend a helping hand to our brethren, whenever the trumpet warns us of danger: for we have all but one cause, one faith, one city. Let us, therefore, "watch, stand fast in the faith, quit us like men, be strong,"<sup>5</sup> and whether we wrestle against principalities, or the world or the flesh, we shall be prepared, and in the name of our God, we shall assuredly overcome, and be delivered from evil.

The book of Esther strikingly shows how Jehovah overrules all things, whether they are right or wrong in themselves, to the security

<sup>1</sup> Psalm i. 3; Rom. i. 10; 3 John ver. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ezra viii. 21—23.

<sup>3</sup> See on Matt. vii. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Nehem. iv. 17—29.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

of His people, and to the overthrow of every conspiracy which may be formed against them. Mordecai is assured that Israel shall be delivered; Esther simply and lovingly complies with his directions: she ventures all and prevails. The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands; and "light and gladness, and joy and honour" rest upon Israel,<sup>1</sup> earnest of its coming triumph in the last day,<sup>2</sup> and emblems of the privileges graciously prepared for the righteous<sup>3</sup> of every tribe and nation upon earth "at His appearing and His kingdom."

In further illustration of the connection between the Old and New Testaments, it would be useful to indicate various points of striking contrast, which serve to elucidate vital truth in its opposite phases; but we cannot now enter into details. A few instances must suffice.<sup>4</sup> One apostle reminds us that "God is a consuming fire,"<sup>5</sup> whilst another sweetly declares that He is love.<sup>6</sup> Uzzah was slain for putting forth his hand to stay the ark.<sup>7</sup> All who touched the hem of His garment were healed by Jesus.<sup>8</sup> We can only have access with confidence to a Holy God, and know His love by faith in the divine Mediator. Independently of Him, all is darkness, gloom and wrath.

There is also an apparent contradiction between the statements in Matthew (xii. 30.) and Luke (ix. 50). "He that is not with me is against me;" and, "he that is not against us is for us." This is easily explained by reference to the real character of true religion, which allows of no neutrality in essentials, nor of any compromise between Christ and the world, whilst it tolerates differences of opinion amongst professors, and will not suffer these to destroy, or even to

<sup>1</sup> Esther viii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> See Isaiah xl. 1, 2; lxv. 18, 19; lxvi. 10, 13; Zeph. iii. 14—17; Rom. xi. 15; 25—29.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xcvi. 11; 1 Peter i. 7; iv. 13.

<sup>4</sup> See above p. 171—174.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. xii. 29, from Deut. iv. 24.

<sup>6</sup> 1 John iv. 8. See above p. 178 and 179, (note.)

<sup>7</sup> 2 Sam vi. 6—10: 1 Chron. xiii. 7—13, with xv. 12, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. xiv. 36; ix. 20—22.

weaken the bonds of brotherly love. We must not *forbid*, or interfere with, those who do not "follow with us," when they are manifestly engaged in the service of our Master. Firmness in principle should be combined with meekness and forbearance in our exactions from others. Thus any encroachment upon the Priesthood was punished with unsparing severity, as concealing the alone sufficiency of Christ, or typically infringing upon His peculiar work; (Num. xvi.,) but Joshua might not restrain any seeming irregularity in the exercise of spiritual gifts. (Id. xi.) The Egyptian must die; but the Israelites, if possible, must be reconciled. (Exod. ii.) The proud, hypocritical Pharisees are denounced with awful vehemence by the meek and lowly Emmanuel; (Matt. xxiii. &c.) but He wept over Jerusalem, and prayed for those that crucified Him, and gently bore with all the infirmities of His disciples.

THE END.



1

1

1

BOUND BY  
BONE & SON



